STAR TREK: VOYAGER!

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

#141

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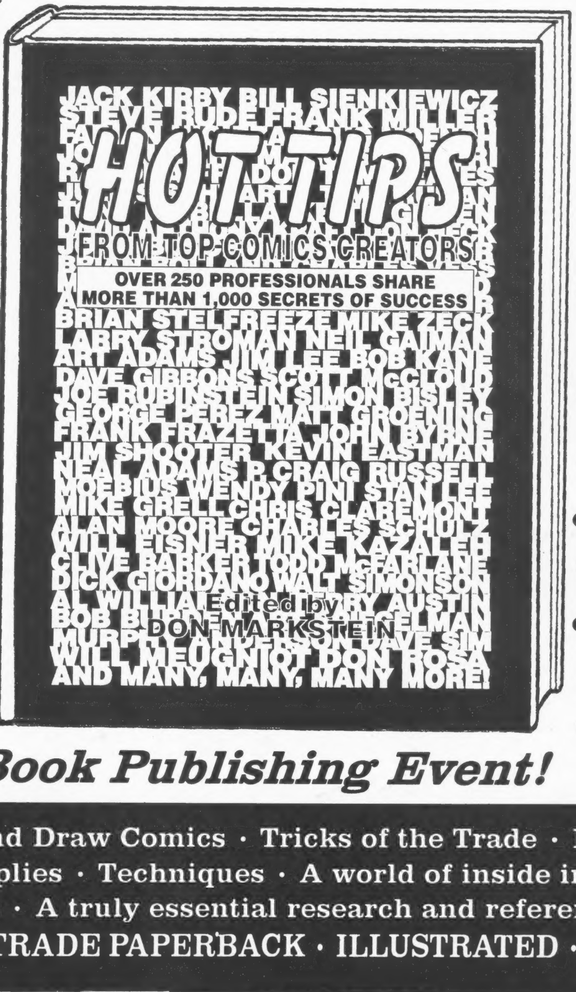

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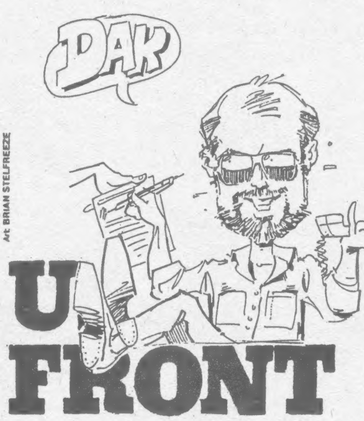
EDITORIAL



UP FRONT

STAR TREK: POLITICALLY CORREK'

Having watched the first few episodes and the pilot of STAR TREK: VOYAGER, I'm hooked — mainly because of the characters. After all, the plot is only a device to put the characters into action. It's their personalities, peculiarities and unique qualities that make us *care* about what happens. The casting is solid and the scripting is sound, so we really care about the care-actors.

All that being said, it also is hard not to notice the politically correct composition of the crew: A woman in command. A black Vulcan. An American Indian. A half-breed female engineer who obtains her position based solely on merit, beating out a man for command. A mixed-race/breed romance.

This is most assuredly STAR TREK for the '90s.

But while this is perhaps more predictable than it is surprising, what is refreshing about it is just how well it all works. As entertainment and maybe — just maybe — as something more.

America is often attacked for exporting cultural colonialism, yet that's not necessarily a bad thing. The U.S.A. is a mixed-breed multi-cultural society — and, as the world shrinks, bringing peoples of different races and cultures into closer contact all the time, the result is all too often violence and intolerance.

Perhaps, with the passage of time and continued exposure to our unique brand of multi-cultural entertainment, such as STAR TREK, a more tolerant attitude will gradually come into existence among various ethnic groups suffering from xenophobic antipathies stretching back to ancient times.

We can hope.

And, hey, we can kick back meanwhile and enjoy STAR TREK.

-David

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“The thing to remember is that Data was a

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Hagen's Log, Stardate 012695: Racing at warp speed into the Deadline Event Horizon, the good ship COMICS INTERVIEW was in periodical peril. Routine life-support systems had failed, and we were on a collision course with the black hole of an empty issue.

"Captain Kraft," I said, "there's just one chance. If we can realign the dilithium crystal infrastructure to create a phase-pulse interflux reaction, we might be able to make subspace contact with the crew of the Starship VOYAGER."

"Make it so," Kraft said.

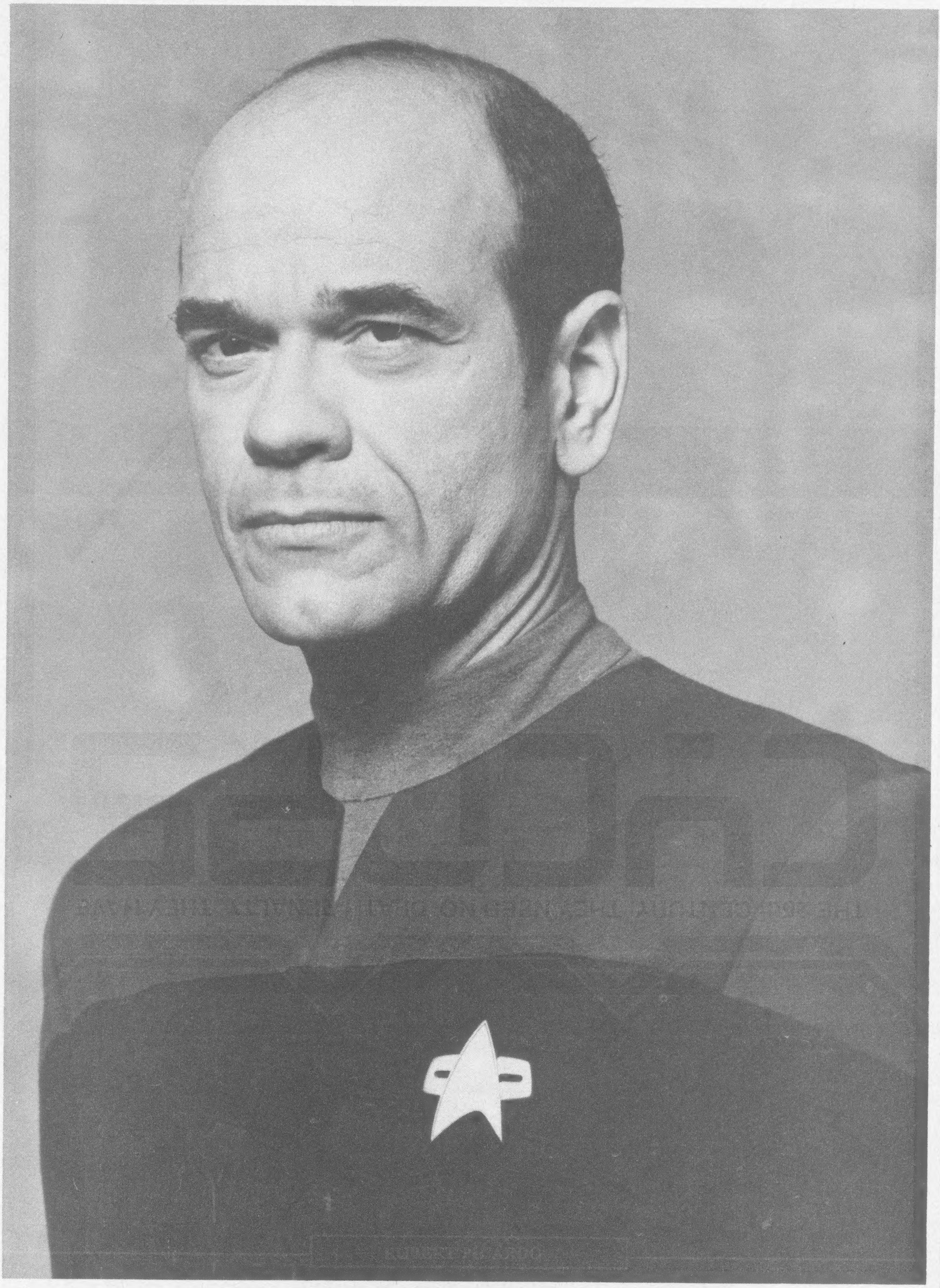
In the nick of time, our distress call was picked up and answered by VOYAGER's holographic simulation medical officer, Doc Zimmerman (Robert Picardo), who graciously provided us with an interview.

The Yale-trained actor, a Philadelphia native, has amassed theatrical credits in David Mamet's SEXUAL PERVERSITY IN CHICAGO, the Broadway comedy GEMINI with Danny Aiello, THE PRIMARY ENGLISH CLASS with Diane Keaton and an award-winning performance in THE NORMAL HEART at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, among others. Originally a pre-med major, Picardo played Dr. Dick Richards previously on the ABC series CHINA BEACH.

He spoke to us from his West Coast home . . .

ROBERT PICARDO

computer; this guy is a computer *program*."



Robert Picardo as Doc Zimmerman.

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“He’s a clean slate. Other than cyberspace,

DAN HAGEN: *I just caught the first two episodes, and enjoyed your performance as the rather irascible doctor. Nice job.*

ROBERT PICARDO: “Irascible” is a very generous term. Cranky. Permanently put-upon.

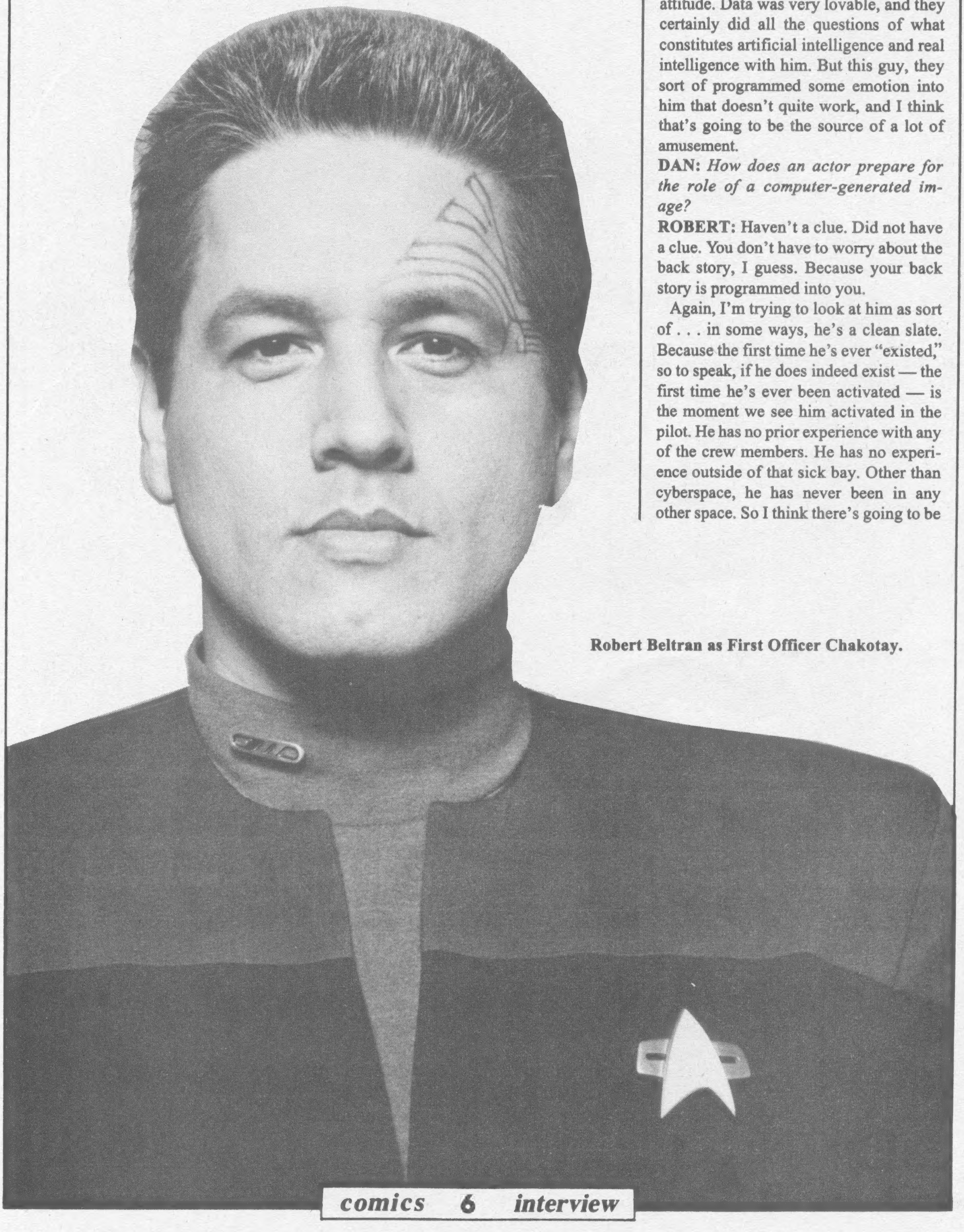
DAN: *I can see the character getting its own following. He has enough quirks to be a kind of Spock or something.*

ROBERT: I think the key to him, the twist that they don’t seem to have done before, is that he’s a computer with an attitude. Data was very lovable, and they certainly did all the questions of what constitutes artificial intelligence and real intelligence with him. But this guy, they sort of programmed some emotion into him that doesn’t quite work, and I think that’s going to be the source of a lot of amusement.

DAN: *How does an actor prepare for the role of a computer-generated image?*

ROBERT: Haven’t a clue. Did not have a clue. You don’t have to worry about the back story, I guess. Because your back story is programmed into you.

Again, I’m trying to look at him as sort of . . . in some ways, he’s a clean slate. Because the first time he’s ever “existed,” so to speak, if he does indeed exist — the first time he’s ever been activated — is the moment we see him activated in the pilot. He has no prior experience with any of the crew members. He has no experience outside of that sick bay. Other than cyberspace, he has never been in any other space. So I think there’s going to be



Robert Beltran as First Officer Chakotay.

he has never been in any other space."

a lot of fun, a lot of discovery for him — the moment they try to liberate him from sick bay. I know there's an upcoming episode where I will be in the holodeck.

DAN: *Surely on the planet's surface at some time, although I guess you'll need a portable generator for that.*

ROBERT: Exactly. I'm sure they'll have a little portable box for me sometime. So there'll be a lot of interesting discovery issues. The thing to remember is that Data was a computer; this guy is a computer program.

DAN: *Right. He's software, basically.*

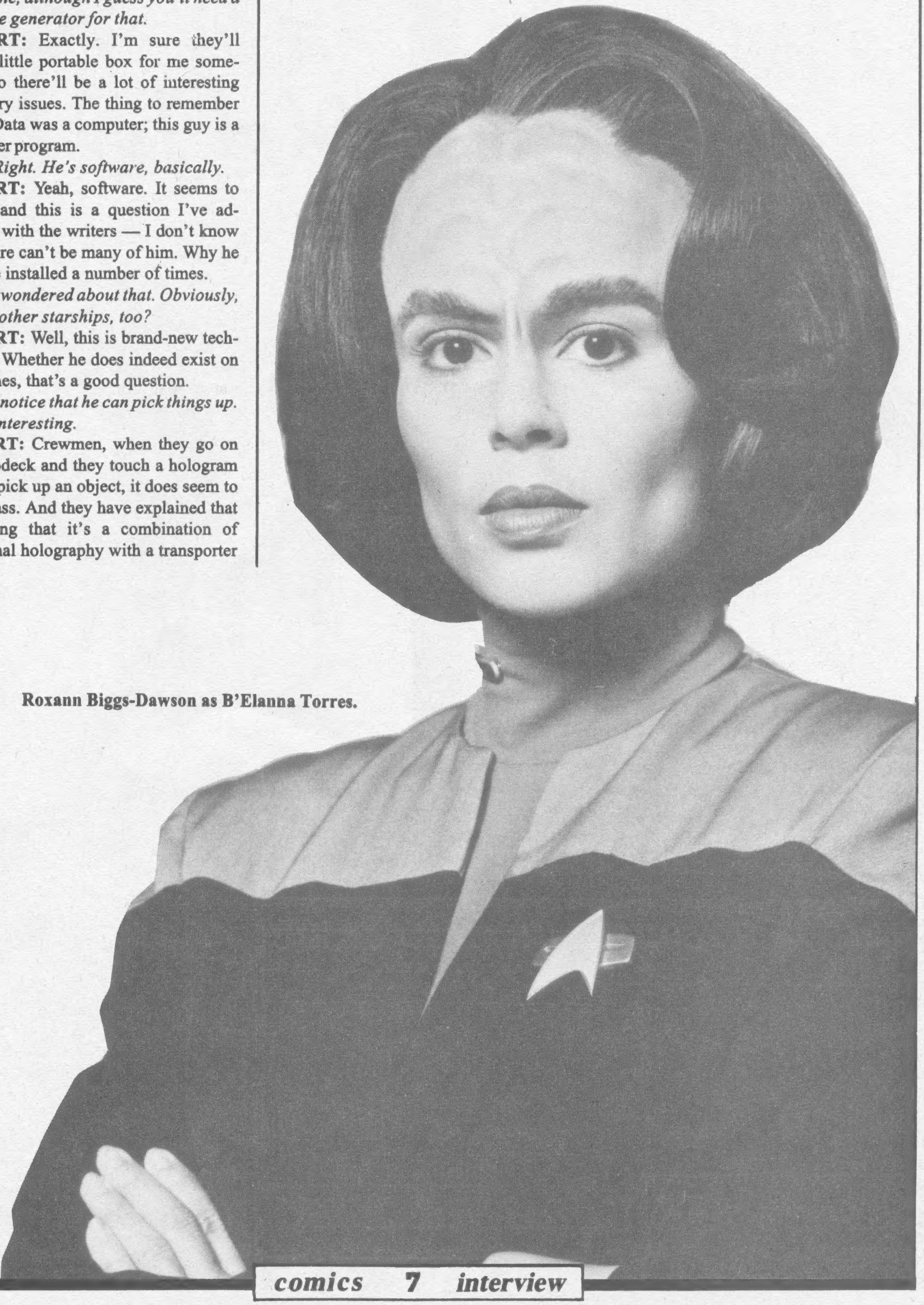
ROBERT: Yeah, software. It seems to me — and this is a question I've addressed with the writers — I don't know why there can't be many of him. Why he can't be installed a number of times.

DAN: *I wondered about that. Obviously, he's on other starships, too?*

ROBERT: Well, this is brand-new technology. Whether he does indeed exist on other ones, that's a good question.

DAN: *I notice that he can pick things up. That's interesting.*

ROBERT: Crewmen, when they go on the holodeck and they touch a hologram or they pick up an object, it does seem to have mass. And they have explained that by saying that it's a combination of traditional holography with a transporter technique, where matter is turned into energy and then returned into matter. I do explain that, I believe, in episode three. Well, let's see, if you count the pilot, episode four. I explain to Paris that the magnetic containment field that creates the illusion of my body can be modulated to allow matter to pass through it, or be stopped.



Roxann Biggs-Dawson as B'Elanna Torres.

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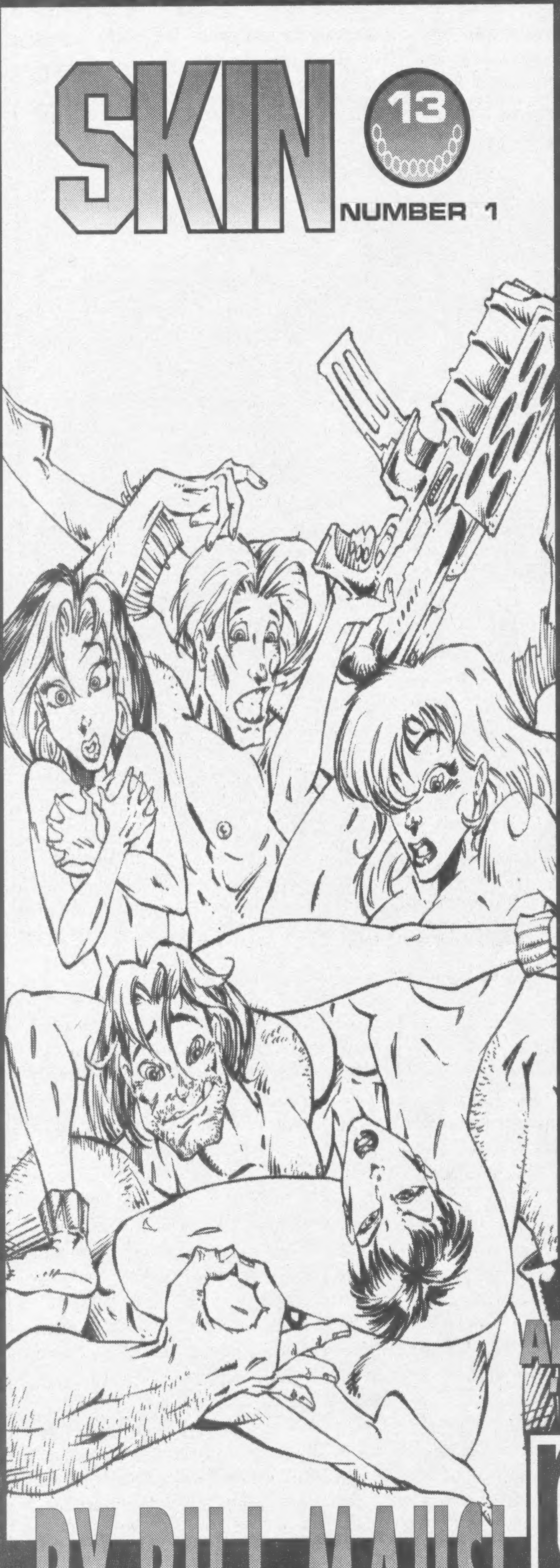
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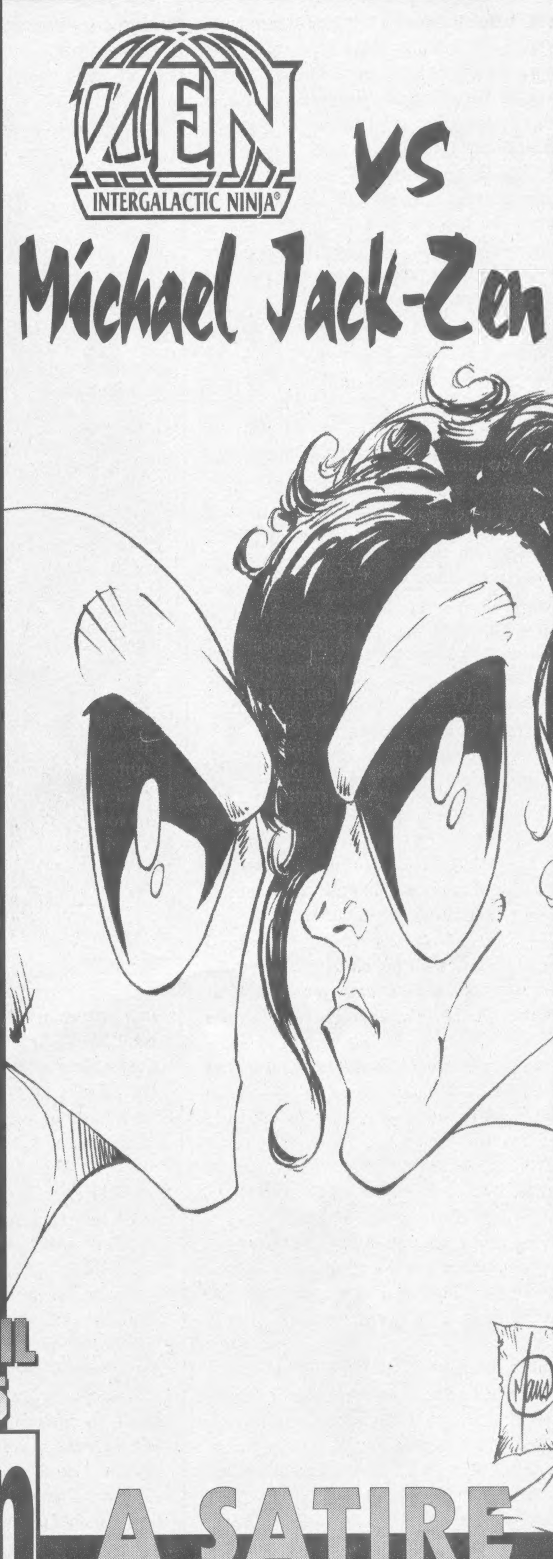
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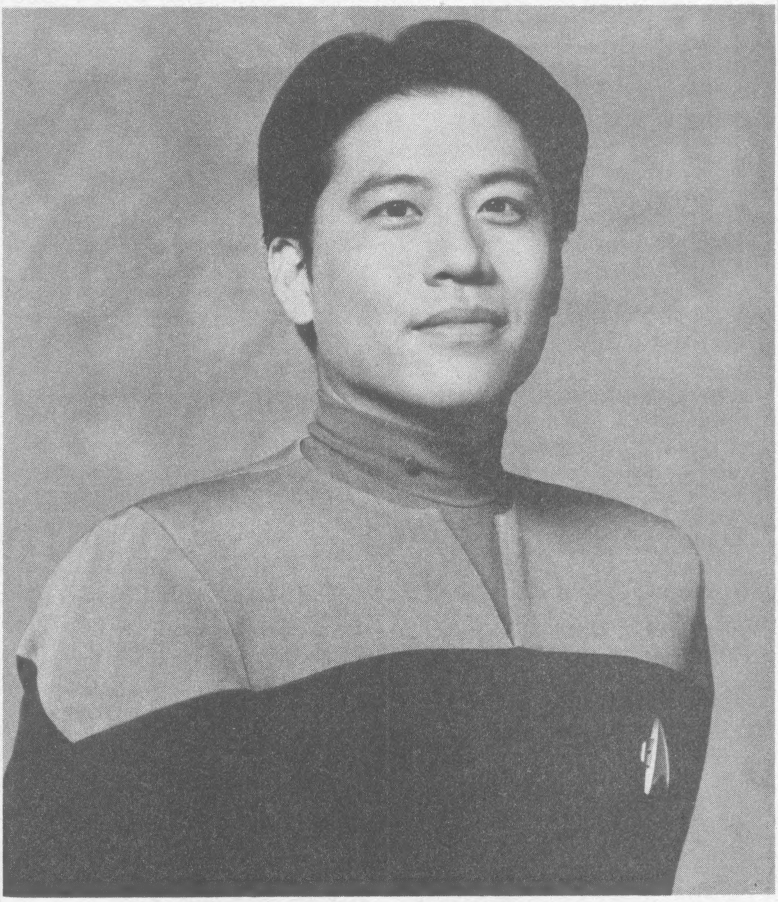
"Now that the golden age of space exploration is over, STAR TREK has taken up that void in our lives."

DAN: *Gee, you know this stuff now.*
ROBERT: Yes I do.
DAN: *That's good. Other sorts of things, too. He can appear and vanish at will. You're right, you should be able to multiply him.*
ROBERT: I addressed that issue to them. I said, "If I am indeed a program, why can't I assist myself in surgery?" And I think they'll have to look to that.
DAN: *Another thing that's intriguing me is that, unlike Data, the doctor doesn't seem particularly aware that he's alive or concerned to be alive. He's not on a quest to become human. He is what he is.*
ROBERT: You know why? I think because he has such a strong central directive, which is "What is the medical emergency? Tell me what it is, and then I will fix the problem." So every time he is called into existence, or however you want to put that — every time he is accessed, it is with his primary directive in place, which is let me fix the emergency. So that doesn't afford him much time . . .
DAN: *For philosophical musing?*
ROBERT: Yes, for musing. But those issues will be addressed shortly, I can assure you. I complain to the captain that people leave me on when I have nothing to do or they shut me off when I'm in the middle of doing something. So the whole issue of control over my own destiny . . .
DAN: . . . *starts to arise. There's also a potential here for the character to have a sort of amusing distance from the dramatic events. Whatever grave crisis the Voyager crew is in, the doctor doesn't really care. He's just there to correct the medical emergency.*
ROBERT: Absolutely. And he also has an authority problem. He's not treated with a great deal of respect because he's treated as if he is, in fact, a piece of software. He tends to be treated like a thing rather than an entity. So in return, he's not very forthcoming as far as respect for Captain Janeway, or anyone else of equal or greater authority than him.
DAN: *Well, good for him.*
ROBERT: I kind of make fun of her in front of the crew in an upcoming episode. She asks me a question for my opinion, and my opinion is always heavily laden with attitude.
DAN: *Excellent. I can see an irony here, too. If and when the Voyager crew succeeds in getting home, the rest of them get to go home and he vanishes. He'll just be turned off.*
ROBERT: Absolutely right.
DAN: *Kind of sad.*
ROBERT: It is a bit sad. There are certain issues about a hologram as far as interacting with humans that I'm curious about, but I'm sure will all be answered in good time.
DAN: *What about a romantic interest for the doctor? Is such a thing possible?*
ROBERT: I don't even know if — if you'll excuse the expression and not print it, please . . .

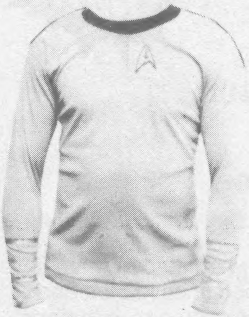
(Picardo makes a clever, though ribald, pun on the word "holodeck." A period of laughter follows.)

DAN *(recovering): A friend of mine, Mary Drake, is an environmental attorney in Texas, and is something of a Trekker. I know lots of Trekkers, and I've watched many episodes myself. This is an old question, but what do you think accounts for this diverse range of people who follow STAR TREK?*
ROBERT: I've heard a lot of wonderful answers given by cast members of earlier versions of STAR TREK that I probably couldn't touch as far as how eloquent and elegant their brief phrase is. But to me, I think at some level they look at us as peering into the future. Obviously, it's an optimistic future. But I think that they treat us like somehow we know something that the contemporary world doesn't know yet. And that by studying us, there might be clues to a better life.

Otherwise, I don't know why such brilliant minds would devote so much energy to studying this . . . you know, basically a piece of fiction.
DAN: *The only thing I can compare it to is the Sherlock Holmes cult, with all those clubs. Similarly, a reassuring time to escape to, although it's in the past.*
ROBERT: Right. It has to be the twin themes that it's optimistic, that it's a future we'd all like to see come about, where very disparate people are living



Garrett Wang as Ops/Comm Officer Harry Kim.



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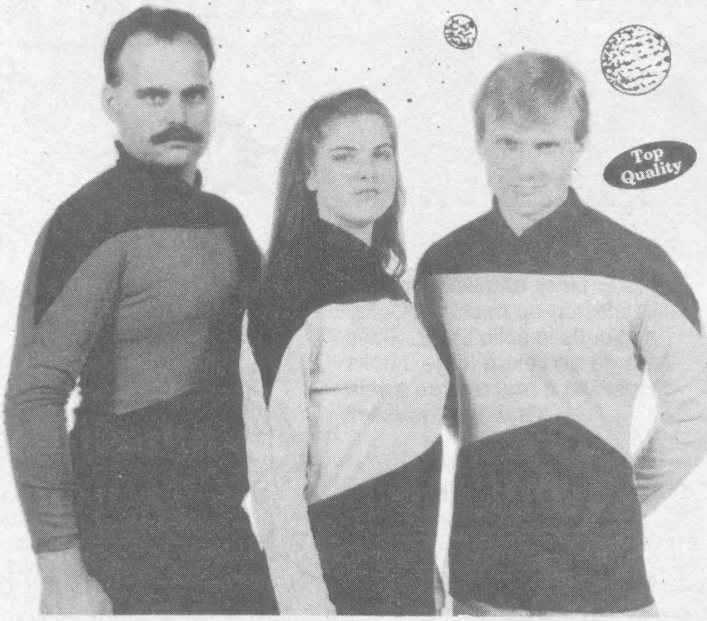

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"It's like we're visitors from the future. Which is ridiculous. We're just actors on a television show."

and working in harmony. And the triumph of technology in many ways. So many human problems that we suffer . . .

DAN: *No more bigotry, no more hunger.*

ROBERT: Yes, that all seems to have been solved. So that's partly it, the optimism. But also, I heard this on a PBS special the other day. All the baby boomers grew up with the boom in space, going to the Moon and our space program, which is now so tapered off — I'm sure primarily for financial reasons, but also because it was our great race with the Soviet Union.

So now that golden age of space exploration for our country is over — but it captivated our imaginations when baby boomers were young — it has taken up that void in our lives. STAR TREK has taken the place of what was once a very real . . .

DAN: *Sense of adventure, and exploration.*

ROBERT: That was happening on a daily basis. That same impulse that had us all standing in front of store windows watching television with the man landing on the Moon, if we happened to be away from our home set . . .

DAN: *You're dating yourself, as I am.*

ROBERT: I had a summer job, and I was on my way home. And I stood and watched it in a Singer Sewing Center through a window when I was, I guess, 16.

DAN: *We're about the same age.*

ROBERT: I'm sure all of this has been said before, but I'm also trying to figure out why they confer upon the actors in the shows such extraordinary status.

DAN: *Exactly. I think Patrick Stewart, who came from a very different British acting tradition in which the public just regards them as actors playing roles, talked about the fact that he comes over here and he's sort of overwhelmed by a blast of adulation.*

ROBERT: But it doesn't happen with all television shows. If a cast member from L.A. LAW or even E.R., now, which is such a popular show, walks down the street, they don't confer upon them the same status.

DAN: *It taps into some sort of mythology thing.*

ROBERT: Exactly. It's like we're visitors from the future. Which, of course, is ridiculous. We're just actors on a television show.

DAN: *Watching the show, I occasionally have to remind myself, "They're just actors. That's just a backdrop. There is no space. They don't see phasers firing." It's easier for the audience to believe than it is for you. I was going to ask you about that, though. Did it concern you, playing a role in which there is the danger of over-identification? And second, did you think about the idea that you're never not going to be recognized again?*

ROBERT: Well, obviously I've thought about it. Although many actors may tell you otherwise, my personal theory is that actors want to be recognized only when they want to be recognized. I mean, no actor never wants to be recognized, and I think very few actors want to be recognized all the time. Whenever it behooves you to be recognized, when it will make your life simpler . . .

DAN: *Getting a table at a restaurant.*

ROBERT: Getting a table at a restaurant, helping you avoid a parking ticket — which, of course, never happens anyway. When it suits your situation or your mood at the moment. But I became an actor and started in the theatre because I loved the process of it, not because I was dying to be famous.

DAN: *You're one of those who was converted in college. You were in pre-med, right?*

ROBERT: Yes. And it was something I enjoyed doing, but I never saw myself as that kind of . . . I think going from a basically shy person, and then overnight you're suddenly in a very extroverted profession, has always been kind of an odd adjustment for me. It's not like I was longing for people to look at me. I didn't have the, "Hey, you've got to look at me" thing. *(Laughter.)*

DAN: *And some actors do.*

ROBERT: And some actors do. And some actors — and usually it's people who are very cosmetically attractive, or have had people looking at them from the moment they're two and three years old anyway — come at acting from the . . .

DAN: *Narcissistic avenue?*

ROBERT: Or just that people tell them that you have to be an actor because you're so handsome, and all that stuff. Which is also a cross I've never had to bear. *(Laughter.)* So the thing that's wonderful about being recognized as an actor is that it seems to help you get work in the future. But also, ultimately, when

Robert Duncan McNeill as Lt. Tom Paris.

“VOYAGER was a conscious effort of the writers to go

you become over-identified with a single role, it can work against that. It's a tricky question. But at this stage of my life, I've had a varied career. I've worked in all media.

DAN: *Done a lot of theatre, I see.*

ROBERT: Done a lot of theatre, and I'm respected in the industry, even though I'm not well known to the American public. I'm hoping that I will still have a certain variety to my career five and six years from now, and not simply be thought of as the guy who was on STAR TREK. And I think that, again, part of that is that I'm not 21 years old, and I've done other very critically-acclaimed television series — a couple of them, actually — so that hopefully will help me at the other end. But I'll have to get back to you on that.

DAN: *I wanted to ask what part you played in Christopher Durang's BEYOND THERAPY. I noticed you were in that.*

ROBERT: I played Bruce.

DAN: *The lead, okay.*

ROBERT: The lead. It's funny. I read for all three roles in that, and that's the first time I worked with **Paul Benedict**, who's an actor/director. He said, “You can play any part in this play.” And I said, “Well, how about the lead?” *(Laughter.)*

DAN: *That's a nice choice. I've always enjoyed the play.*

ROBERT: Unfortunately — this sounds like a terribly callous thing to say, and I don't mean it to — but the reality is that the AIDS epidemic has killed that play.

DAN: *It's a good point. You have to look at it now as a period piece.*

ROBERT: But even then, things that used to be spontaneous laughs are now just a little uneasy. I did that play shortly after it was written. It was the L.A. premiere, so it was before the AIDS virus. It was just sort of vague, the first writings about the “gay plague.” But now, there are just so many things in that play that I can't imagine people would still laugh at, even as a period piece. But it was a wonderful piece of writing.

DAN: *One thing I've noticed about the series, too, is that both reviewers and people I've talked to all say that VOYAGER reminds them of the first series more than the last two. Have you heard that?*

ROBERT: I have heard that. I've actually seen it more in print than I've heard it.

DAN: *Was that a conscious effort?*

ROBERT: It was definitely a back-to-basics effort on the part of the writers. Obviously, this was all conceptual and I, of course, have nothing to do with that. But from what I've heard, I think it was a conscious effort on the part of the writers to go back to basics. They had created such a complex world. Just the fact that they did 170 hours of the NEXT GENERATION, and they only did 73 hours of the first series, they're bound to have explored that world more . . .

DAN: *As you say, it became somewhat arcane. Tasha Yar's evil twin from a parallel universe traveling back in time . . . I thought, whoa, it's getting hard to follow.*

ROBERT: And to be liberated from all

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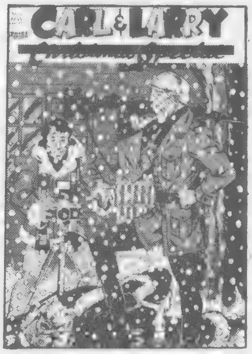

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back to basics. I think they did a very smart thing."

those old faces, the regular villains.

DAN: *You don't have to run into Romulans, Cardassians . . .*

ROBERT: Exactly. And if you do, you can replay the same themes, but it seems different because you're dressing it up differently. So I think they did a very smart thing. It's also, of course, been compared to LOST IN SPACE. So it's a whole new ball game.

So in that sense, I think it's easier to join our world now. For example, it might be easier than watching DEEP SPACE NINE. If you've never watched STAR TREK before, and you try to become a STAR TREK fan just starting out with the pilot and the first episodes of DEEP SPACE NINE, that may have been more challenging than for a viewer coming to our show.

DAN: *I must say, DEEP SPACE NINE kind of bored me. I know you don't want to be disloyal to it, but there is something about a show called STAR TREK in which they basically sit around in space that is a missed concept, I think. STAR TREK should be zooming around. Also, it seems like there's a bit more of a fun, action-adventure orientation, more like the first series, rather than NEXT GENERATION and DEEP SPACE NINE.*

ROBERT: It's hard to tell this early out, but certainly these first shows seem to be. I mean, let's face it, when they start a television series they want the first dozen episodes to be really exciting. They're going to get more into the "bottle" shows, so to speak — the little theoretical question that's examined basically on the ship, not necessarily going to planets or having a fight in space. I would think they would get to simpler shows, once the audience knows the characters and doesn't have to be wowed by the digital effects and all that. So I would think that once they know our characters — and hopefully they'll like our characters — that the shows can get somewhat less flashy, and still really command interest.

DAN: *Sure. One thing I was thinking, too, is that popular culture tends to be pretty conservative in what it accepts, which makes this something of a milestone in that we may, at last, be ready to accept a woman as an action-adventure hero. Do you think that time has come?*

ROBERT: Absolutely.

DAN: *I do too. It's been talked about a lot, but it's only been in the last few years that you've seen things like Jody Foster in SILENCE OF THE LAMBS or Sigourney Weaver in the ALIENS movies, that the public seems ready to accept.*

ROBERT: You know, there are certain issues that it seems always have to be addressed. If an audience finally buys a woman in an action-adventure lead, then somehow it makes the romantic side of it troubling. Because I think to an extent, subliminally, men say, "Okay, I'm willing to accept her as a man." *(Laughter.)*

I'm not saying this is right, I'm saying this is what I think is going on. Because men are willing to project their own fantasies *over* the image of the woman, saying, "Okay, I'm just going to pretend she's like a guy." Then, when they have her acting like a woman in a romantic relationship, then men suddenly become disoriented. *(Laughter.)* Don't quite

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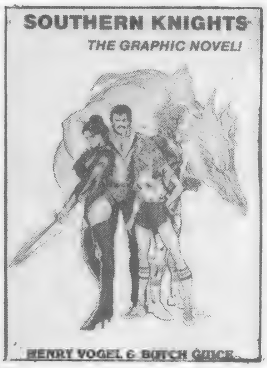

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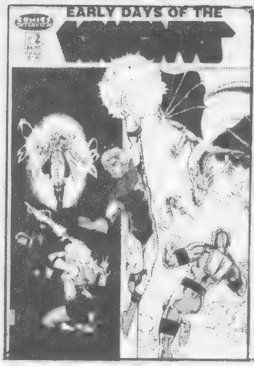

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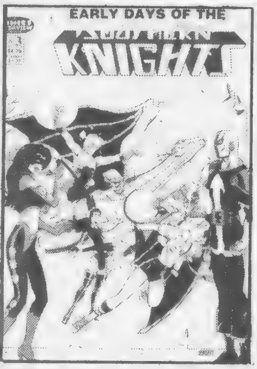

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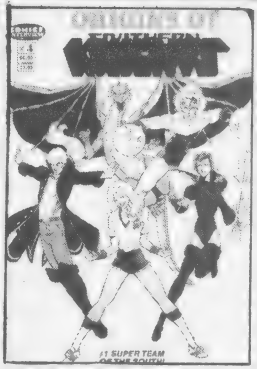

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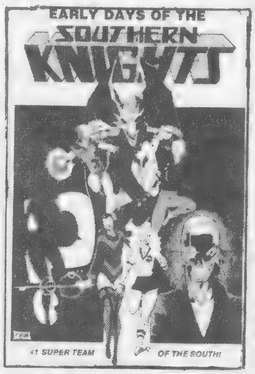

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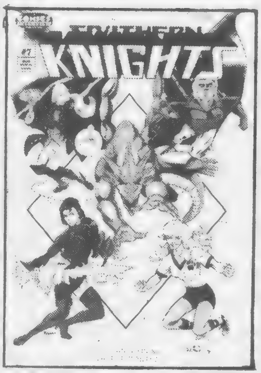

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‘Kate is a wonderful actress and we’re lucky to

know what to do then.

DAN: *Good point.*

ROBERT: But hopefully we’re ready to get beyond that.

DAN: *I think it’s going to work with this one. But it’s another part of the acting job for Kate Mulgrew that I think is difficult. How do you avoid the Hillary Clinton trap? To be forceful and tough enough, but not a bitch?*

ROBERT: I know what you’re saying. I think Kate is a wonderful actress and we’re lucky to have her, and I think she’s only going to get better and better. You know, there was an enormous amount of pressure on her in the pilot to establish her “command,” so to speak. But now it’s just been accepted, and she can relax into the role. I think she’ll have the freedom to have many more colors than she might have allowed herself in the pilot.

DAN: *Were you on board when Genevieve Bujold was there?*

ROBERT: I met her very briefly during the “Hi, how are you, let’s walk through the sets.” But no, I did not work with her, because they were working on the bridge, and as we all know . . .

DAN: *You don’t exist there. Did it shake people up when she left?*

ROBERT: I think so. I think that everybody was shaken up.

Well, first of all, the script was so good. Everything about auditioning for this experience was like you’re auditioning for really a known quantity here. Everybody knows what they’re doing; they know what they want. And then suddenly to have it all sort of set adrift — the literal image of the ship without a captain. Suddenly to go, “Wait a minute. We all felt so secure a minute ago.” *(Laughter.)* We’d gotten the great acting job of our career, and it was all up for grabs again. So it was a little unsettling.

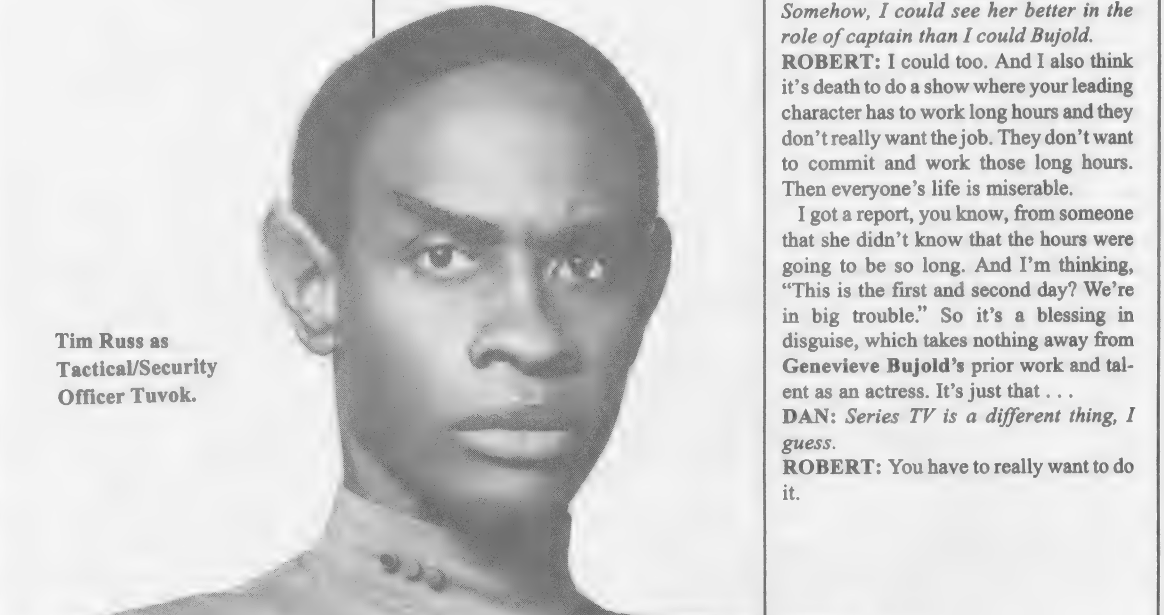
DAN: *I was wondering about her casting choice when it happened, and then she was gone so quickly and Kate was in. Somehow, I could see her better in the role of captain than I could Bujold.*

ROBERT: I could too. And I also think it’s death to do a show where your leading character has to work long hours and they don’t really want the job. They don’t want to commit and work those long hours. Then everyone’s life is miserable.

I got a report, you know, from someone that she didn’t know that the hours were going to be so long. And I’m thinking, “This is the first and second day? We’re in big trouble.” So it’s a blessing in disguise, which takes nothing away from **Genevieve Bujold’s** prior work and talent as an actress. It’s just that . . .

DAN: *Series TV is a different thing, I guess.*

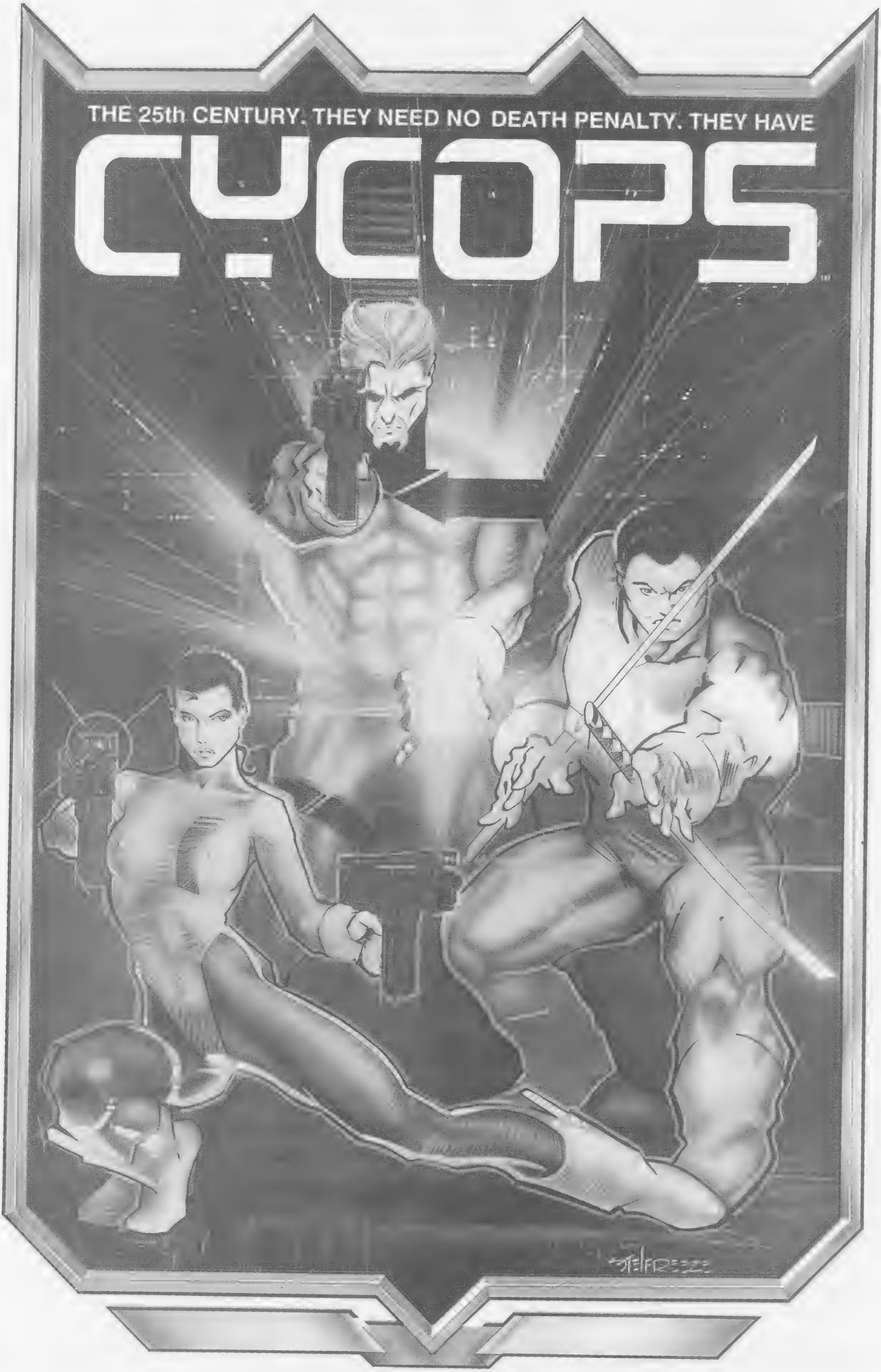
ROBERT: You have to really want to do it.



Tim Russ as Tactical/Security Officer Tuvok.

have her. Which takes nothing away from Bujold."

Kate Mulgrew as Captain Kathryn Janeway.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“There’s certainly not one weak actor in the cast.”

DAN: *How long are the hours? What are your shooting days like?*

ROBERT: Because I work on one set, if I have five, six scenes in a show, I can do them all in a day or a day and a half. When I work, I work a long day and a half, but then I’m off for three or four days.

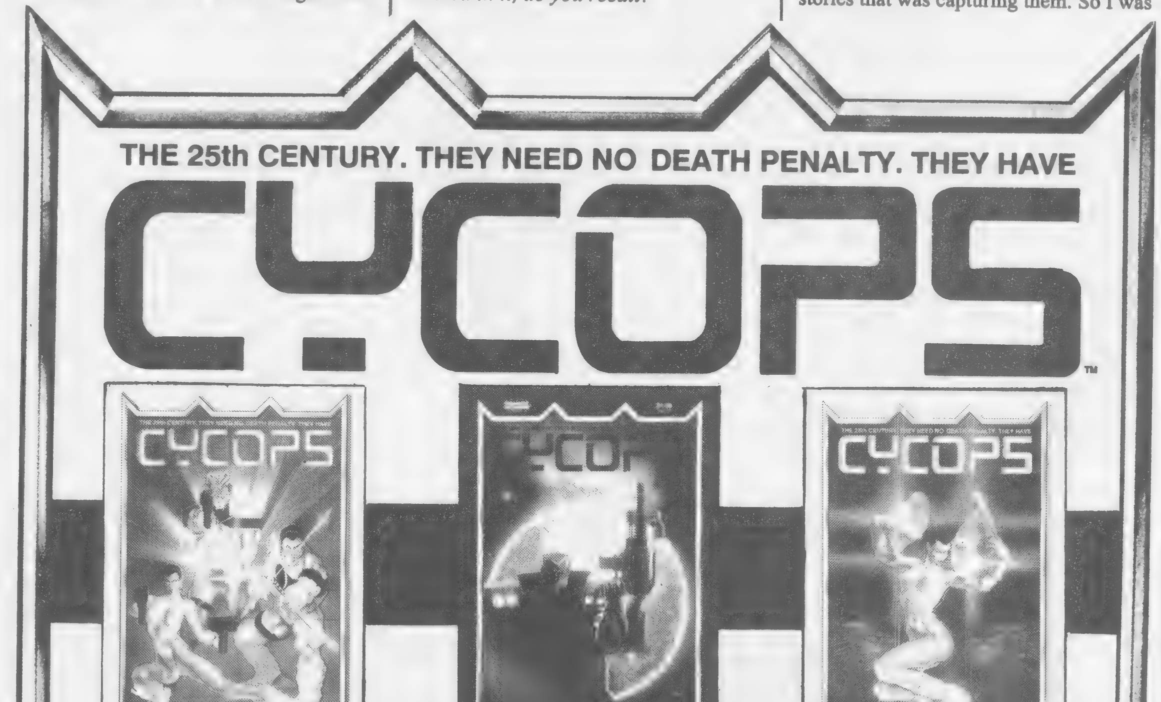
DAN: *So they shoot all your stuff bunched together.*

ROBERT: That’s not unusual in television. You shoot all stuff on one set, so you don’t have to move all the lights and equipment. In a show where I have as much screen time as another of the regulars, they may have had to have been there twice as many hours because they’re working in large group scenes, which take longer to shoot. And they’re working on three or four sets, where I’m working on one set. I guess my point is that for every minute I’m there, it means that I’m going to be on screen. So as far as an actor’s situation, it’s pretty ideal.

DAN: *What did you think of the STAR TREK phenomenon before you were involved in it, do you recall?*

ROBERT: You know, I’ve had a lot of friends in my life who were hooked on the show, including these two close friends I had at Yale, who I ended up rooming with for about a year or two. They would sit and watch it every afternoon, and I would make fun of them.

These were like philosophy majors, very bright guys. I was never into it, because I couldn’t get past the funny costumes and silly sets and funny ears. I never spent enough time to get past the externals and see what it was about the stories that was capturing them. So I was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"Two close friends at Yale would watch

not a fan, but a lot of people that I know and respect have loved the show.

So when I finally got cast in it, I started to study basically THE NEXT GENERATION and watched a good 20 shows or something. I asked for the best ones, and I didn't have an endless period of time to cram them. And I was thrilled that the storytelling was so good and the show was so beautiful to look at. On the old show, the lighting was so bright and the set was so basic. Now it has such a wonderful atmosphere to it, and it's so beautifully lit, that it looks just like a movie.

DAN: *Did you call your old college roommates and tell them you were going to be . . .*

ROBERT: No, you know, I should do that. I have fallen out of touch with both these guys. I'm sure they'll know. of course, they were a year or two ahead of me so I won't see them at my reunion, if I go. But I should call them; you're absolutely right.

DAN: *Do you have any particular friends in the cast?*

ROBERT: I have known — we call him **John Phillips — Ethan Phillips,** who plays Neelix. We're like audition buddies. We have known each other for 17 years, starting in New York. I've always loved his work, and been happy to bump into him and chat, but we didn't know each other really well. But now, having the opportunity to spend some time together, we're becoming fast friends. I like several of the actors already, but he's the one that I guess I've spent the most time with. There's certainly not one weak actor in the cast.

DAN: *I agree. And there's an intriguing mix of characters. I like the fact that other than just the paramilitary Star Fleet officers, we also have this rebel element that brings in something new.*

ROBERT: They're all bright people, too. If you talk to any one of the cast members, everyone is interesting. Even people who may not be as articulate, perhaps because they're younger. **Jennifer Lien,** for example, who plays Kes,

Jennifer Lien as Kes.

STAR TREK. I would make fun of them.”

is a really, really lovely person and a very interesting and bright girl, but does not like to talk about acting. If you asked her a question, she might not be an easy interview.

DAN: *Is there a favorite episode or theme upcoming?*

ROBERT: I think that in the fourth regular episode, or fifth if you count the pilot, there's a possibility that our crew members are going to be able to escape this quadrant that we're in and be transported back to a familiar quadrant. And they would leave nothing on the ship, except me. Because I can't be transported. My systems are too embedded in sick bay. So that nothing but this sort of night light would be left on, burning, in this ship floating through space with no one on it until the energy of the ship went down and he basically burned out — the issues sort of addressed by that script, which I think is called “Eye of the Needle,” I thought were the most moving and interesting for my character.

DAN: *Right. Even if he has not much of a sense that he's alive, in this case he won't even be able to fulfill his function. He'll just be drifting in purgatory.*

ROBERT: It's like opening a can of worms, having another character who basically tells you, “Well, if you're not alive, how come you can do this and you can think, can't you?” And he says, “Well, I can assimilate and process data.” Kes's character, who becomes my friend in sick bay, is constantly questioning how I'm different from a real person So once someone gets you thinking along those lines — or processing your data along those lines — then it opens a new can of worms, which is, “Maybe I don't want to be alone.”

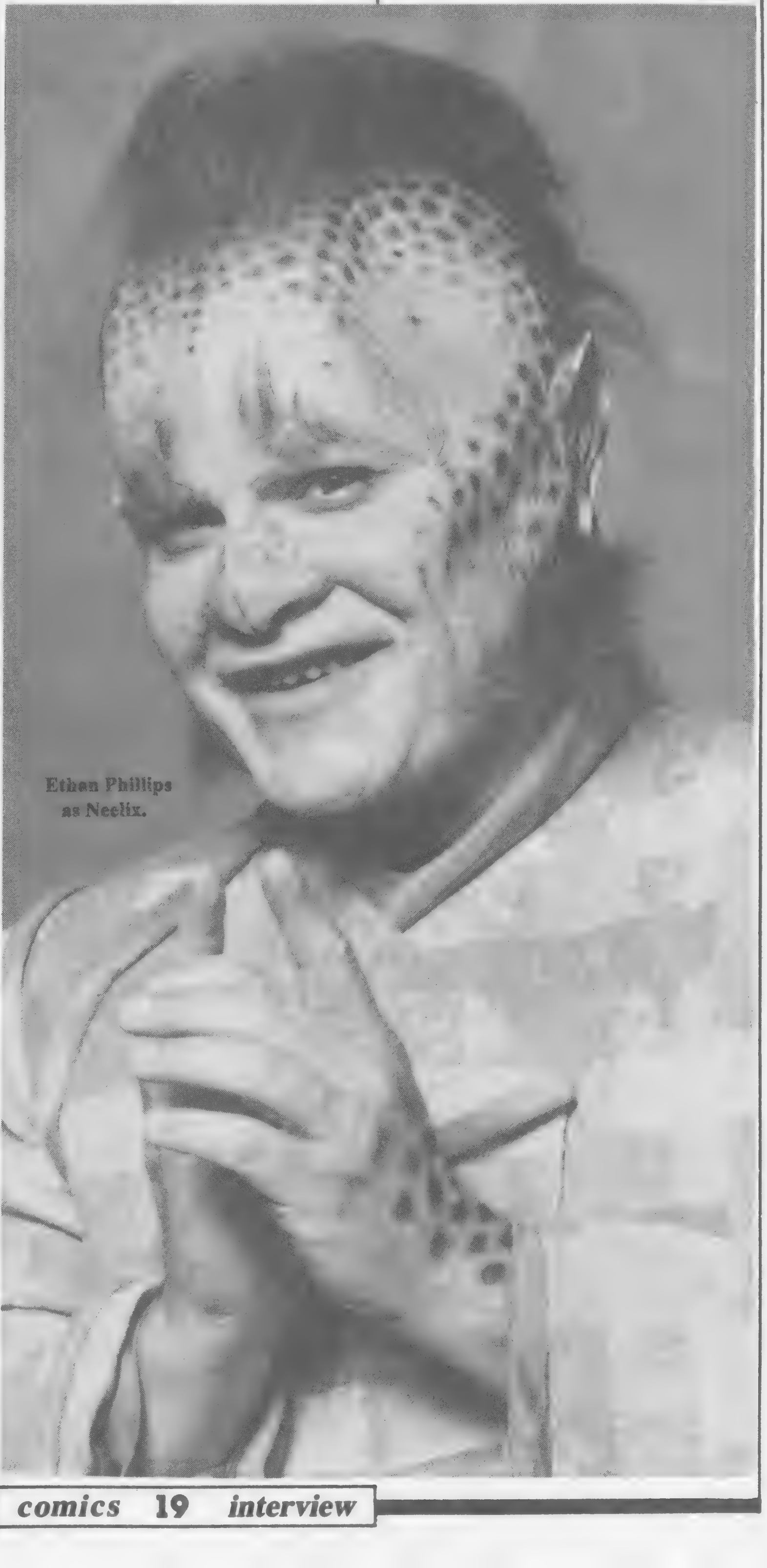
DAN: *STAR TREK has become a mini-industry, in effect. You can now foresee that there may never be a time when there isn't a new STAR TREK series on the air. And you'll be looking in Waldenbooks sometime and there will be your image on a series of paperback novels.*

ROBERT: You're right, it'll all come to pass. The honeymoon period was working on it before the premiere. Not everybody knows who you are. But then, as the honeymoon period went on, it kind of went like, “All right. Let's get it out there and see if we're going to live up to our hype.”

And now that we've had such a successful premiere and all that, I feel like the next step will be the next time I go into Toys R Us to buy presents for my kids, I'll see my action figure. *(Laughter.)*

DAN: *That's got to be a strange moment.*

ROBERT: I would think so. I asked the producer, “Do you want me to wear a toupee, or not?” And he said, “No, we want you just the way you are.” I thought, “Yup. I'll have a flesh-toned head on my action figure.” *(Laughter.)*



Ethan Phillips as Neelix.

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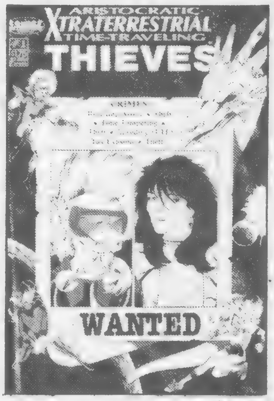
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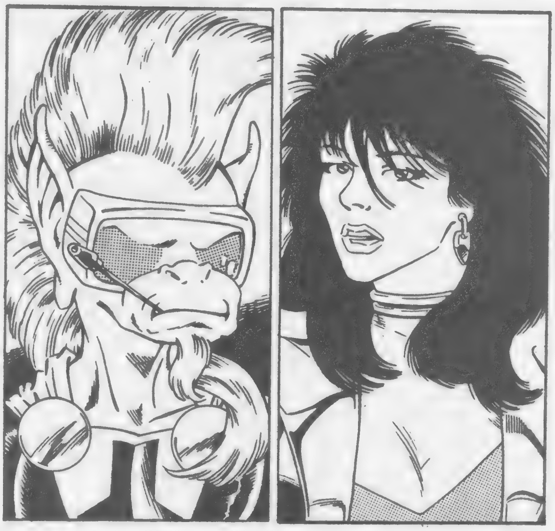

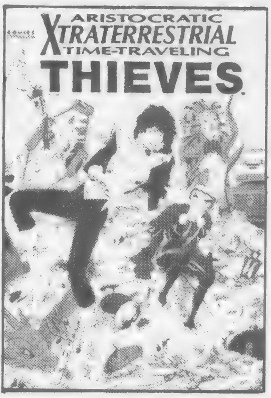
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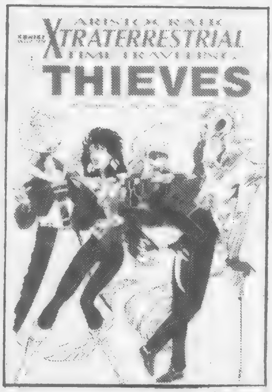
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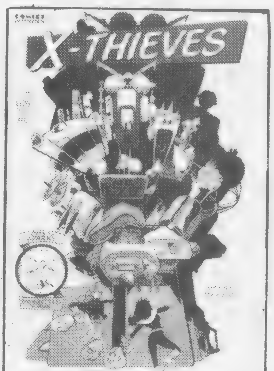

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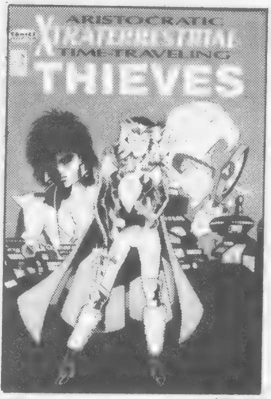
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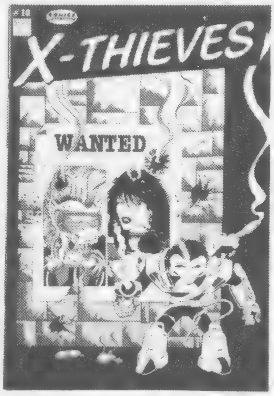
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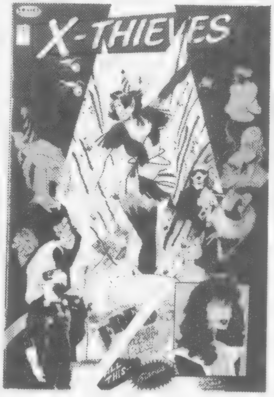

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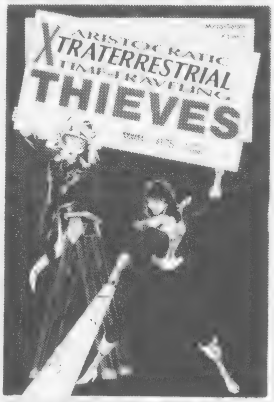
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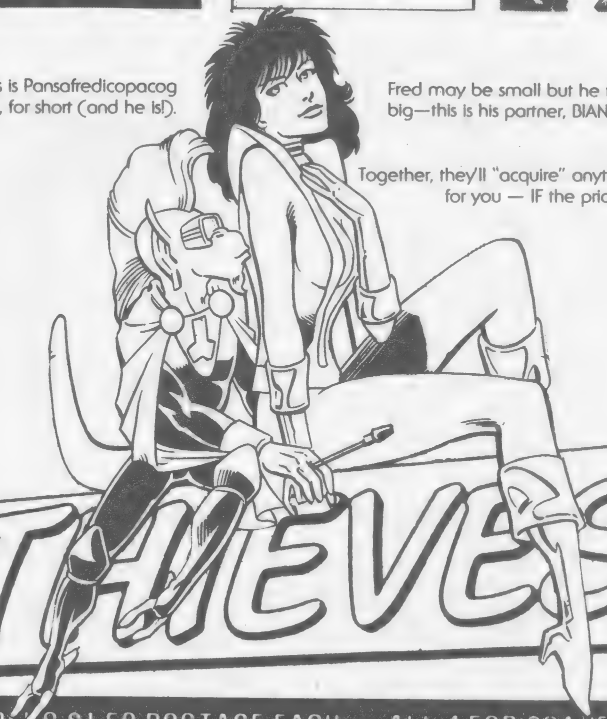

This is Pansafredicopacog — FRED, for short (and he is!).

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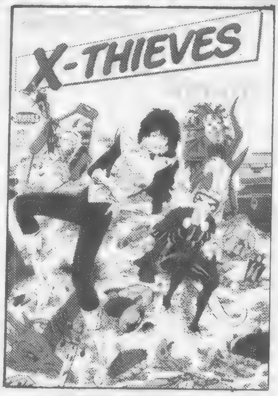

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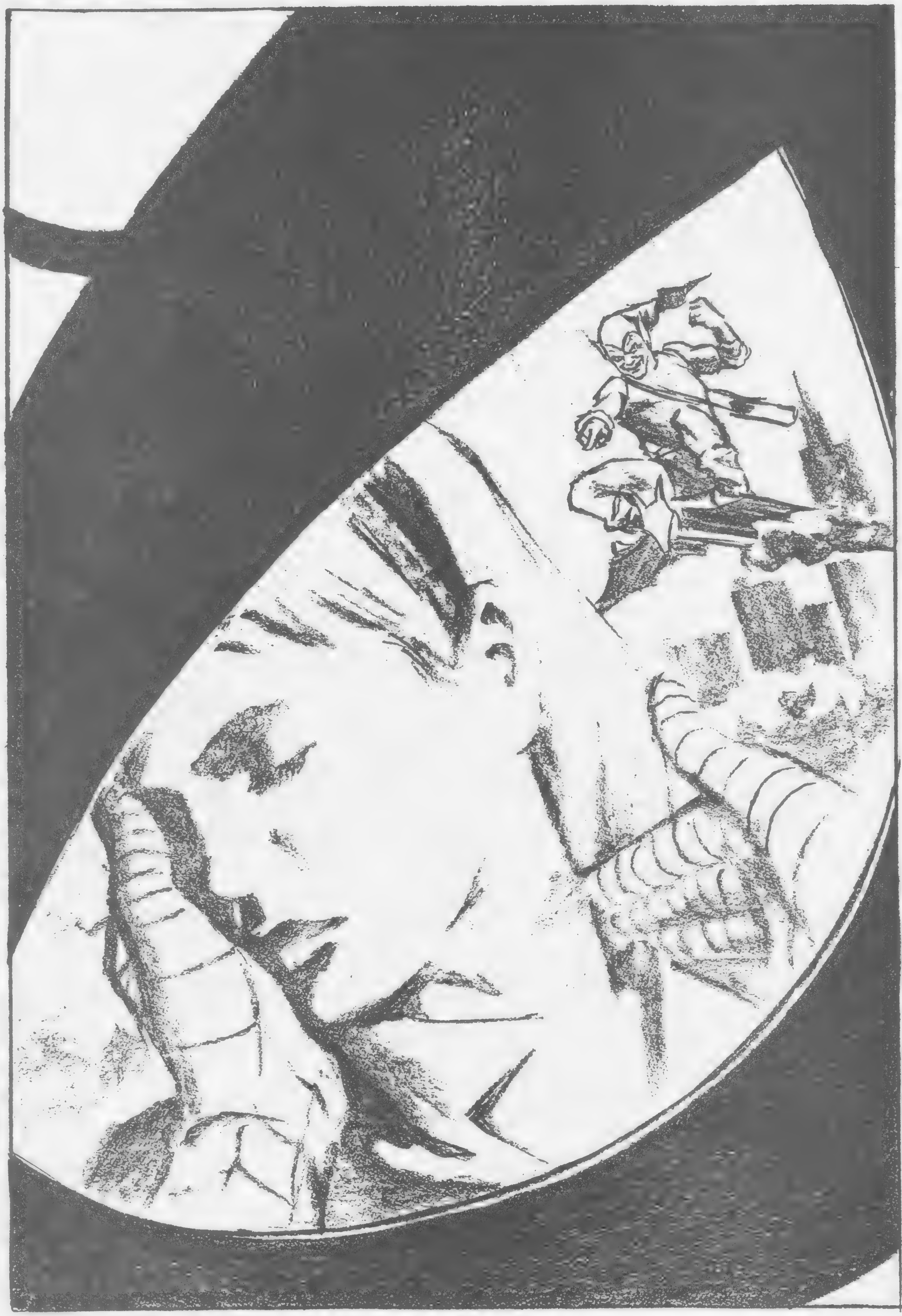
stories?" KURT: "That would be me." *(Laughter.)*

BUSIEK



Early cover pencil rough for the fourth book of the MARVELS mini-series. The most significant alteration is the distance perspective of the Green Goblin's full figure — seen as a close-up in the finished/ used cover. Other differences include the "actions" of Spider-Man himself. (Pull your copy of MARVELS Book Four for the full effect.) Kurt's boyish face is revealed on the opening page of this most interesting of CI interviews.

"What's the concept? 'Ten Heroes Alex Likes?'"

masseuse?

LOU: *Oh, that must have gotten past you!*

KURT: Where was that?

LOU: *That was in the NORMAN OSBORN DEAD headline in issue #4.*

KURT: Well, I typeset all those, so if it's there, I wrote it. I'll have to grab the book and double-check that one. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Anyways, I guess the question I'll lead out with after that is — as if we all didn't know — tell me the story of how MARVELS came about, your involvement in same, and what it's meant to you in terms of your career and perception of such in the industry since then.*

KURT: Gee, that's a question that has a long answer. *(Laughter.)*

So how did MARVELS get started, is Clause One of your question. Basically, Marvels got started with **Alex Ross.** Back when I was editing OPEN SPACE, I had seen Alex's work on a mini-series, TERMINATOR: THE BURNING EARTH. He was a terrific artist, so I tracked him down and hired him to do a story for OPEN SPACE. The story he did was a gorgeous, fully-painted job that never got printed. It was slated for OPEN SPACE #5 or #6, and the series ended with #4.

LOU: *Ouch!*

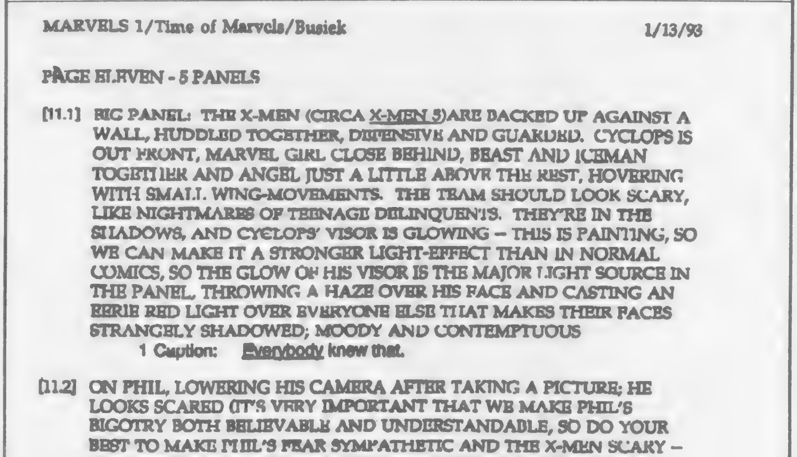
KURT: But after Alex's first go-round with the comics industry, he had reason to think well of me. I may not have printed Alex's story, but I had paid him. I had treated him professionally, paid him on time, all that kind of good stuff. So when he decided he wanted to get back into comics, he contacted me. By that time I was working as a freelance writer, and living out here on the West Coast. He sent me a whole bunch of samples that included some presentation work for a series that he wanted to do called MARVEL. The concept of the MARVEL series was that it would be like an ongoing anthology of painted superhero stories, sort of like MARVEL FANFARE, but painted. And Alex would do some of them, and other people would do some of them. He just wanted to sell it as an anthology.

And my reaction was, "Gee, Alex, the work is beautiful. It'll just blow editors away, but you probably can't sell this anthology idea. For one thing, as a creator, you probably can't sell a book that is supposed to be done by other people than you. If you wanted to pitch an anthology book that was all your work, that would be one thing. But saying, 'Oh, by the way, you're going to have to go and hire *other* people,' there'll be some resistance to that. And when you boil it down to the stuff that you want, what are you gonna call the book? You know, what's the sales concept of the book? 'Ten Heroes Alex Likes'?"

So I told him that he needed a different focus. He needed a series concept. And during the months that we kind of talked back and forth about what it might be, I got him some work doing a Miracleman story for MIRACLEMAN: APOCRYPHA. After the Miracleman story, he and I pitched a series to Eclipse, and the editor at Eclipse really wanted him to do some **Clive Barker** stuff. So she sent his samples to Clive. And Clive called him up and said, "Your work is tremendous. It's great-looking stuff. I want you to do the artwork on this important big turning-point issue of HELLRAISER. And I've sent your samples on to **Marc McLaurin** at Marvel/Epic." And Marc called Alex and said, "Yeah, this stuff looks great! I want you to do this issue of HELLRAISER. But these paintings of Marvel heroes — what is this?" *(Laughter.)*

And Alex said, "Well, it's a series **Kurt Busiek** and I have been kicking around ideas for. Do you want to see a proposal?" And Marc said, "You *bet* I wanna see a proposal!" So now we actually had to put our thoughts down on paper. We worked

Here: a rare glimpse at one of Kurt's script pages from MARVELS (with Ross's tiny thumbnail sketch at the bottom). The version used follows (next page) in pencil form. Another unused translation of this page accompanies Ross's interview.



MARVELS 1/Time of Marvels/Busiek 1/13/93

PAGE ELEVEN - 5 PANELS

[11.1] BIG PANEL: THE X-MEN (CIRCA X-MEN 5)ARE BACKED UP AGAINST A WALL, HUDDLED TOGETHER, DEFENSIVE AND GUARDED. CYCLOPS IS OUT FRONT, MARVEL GIRL CLOSE BEHIND, BEAST AND ICEMAN TOGETHER AND ANGEL JUST A LITTLE ABOVE THE REST, HOVERING WITH SMALL WING-MOVEMENTS. THE TEAM SHOULD LOOK SCARY, LIKE NIGHTMARES OF TEENAGE DELINQUENTS. THEY'RE IN THE SHADOWS, AND CYCLOPS' VISOR IS GLOWING – THIS IS PAINTING, SO WE CAN MAKE IT A STRONGER LIGHT-EFFECT THAN IN NORMAL COMICS, SO THE GLOW OF HIS VISOR IS THE MAJOR LIGHT SOURCE IN THE PANEL, THROWING A HAZE OVER HIS FACE AND CASTING AN EERIE RED LIGHT OVER EVERYONE ELSE THAT MAKES THEIR FACES STRANGELY SHADOWED; MOODY AND CONTEMPTUOUS

1 Caption: Everybody knew that.

[11.2] ON PHIL, LOWERING HIS CAMERA AFTER TAKING A PICTURE; HE LOOKS SCARED (IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE MAKE PHIL'S BIGOTRY BOTH BELIEVABLE AND UNDERSTANDABLE, SO DO YOUR BEST TO MAKE PHIL'S FEAR SYMPATHETIC AND THE X-MEN SCARY – FOR NOW). WE SEE MORE OF THE BENSON'S DISPLAY PAST HIM.

2 Caption: The X-Men.
3 Caption: I'd never seen them before, but I'd heard of them.
4 Caption: Super-powered mutants. Freaks. They looked just like normal people –

[11.3] ON THE X-MEN, FOCUSING ON MARVEL GIRL AND THE ANGEL, AS THE CROWD MOVES IN CLOSER, MENACING. AGAIN, THE LIGHT OF CYKE'S VISOR THROWS WEIRD LIGHT ON THEIR FACES, MAKING SCARED EXPRESSIONS LOOK HAUGHTY.

5 Caption: – but you never could tell.
6 Marvel Girl: Stay back! Don't touch me!
7 Angel: You heard the lady! Back off!

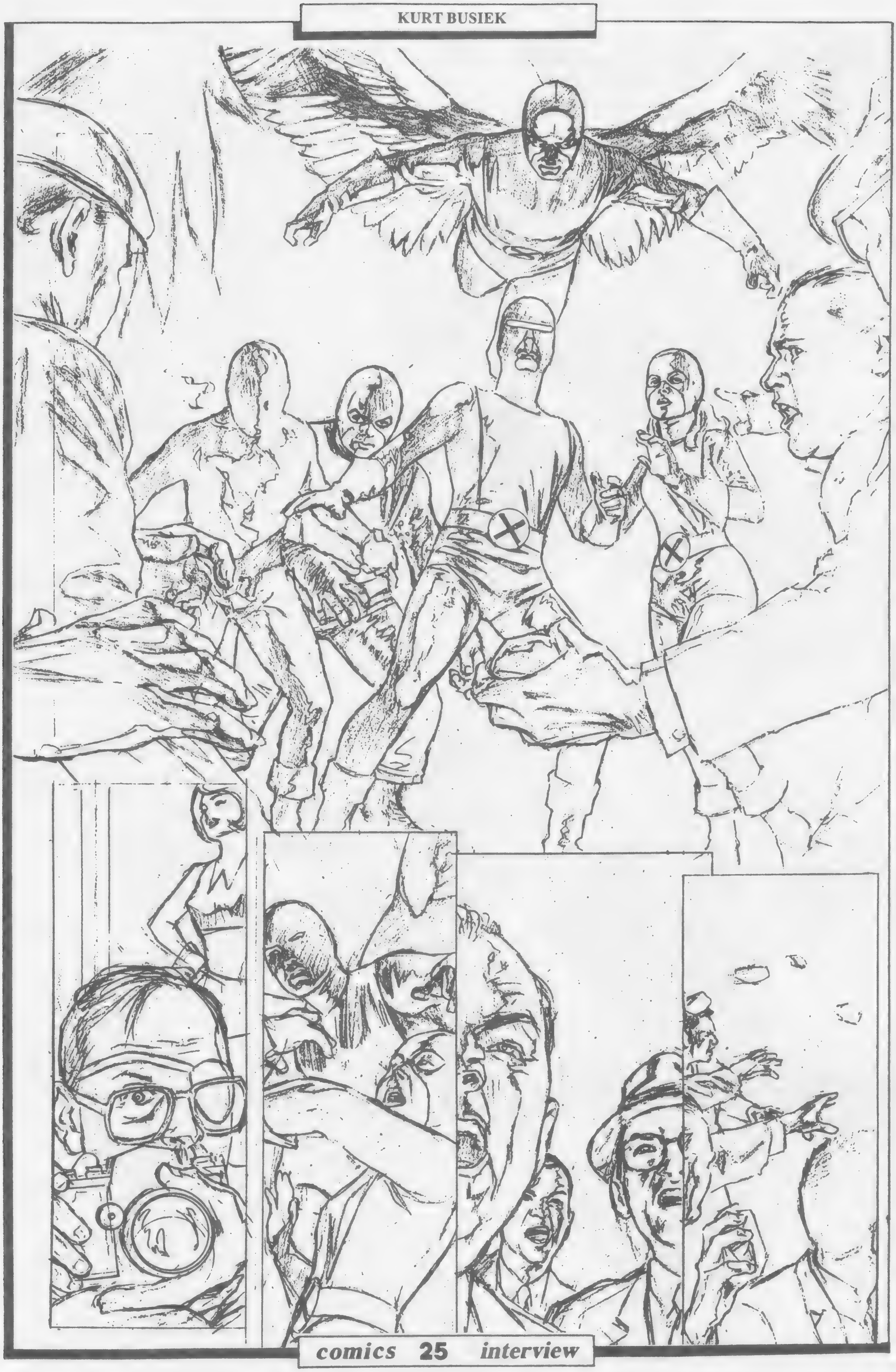
[11.4] THE CROWD GETS UGLIER, MORE MENACING.

8 Crowd Guy: What'sa matter, girlie? Real humans not good enough for ya?
9 Other Guy: Same to you!
10 Third Guy: We don't want your kind around here!

[11.5] THE CROWD STARTS THROWING THINGS.

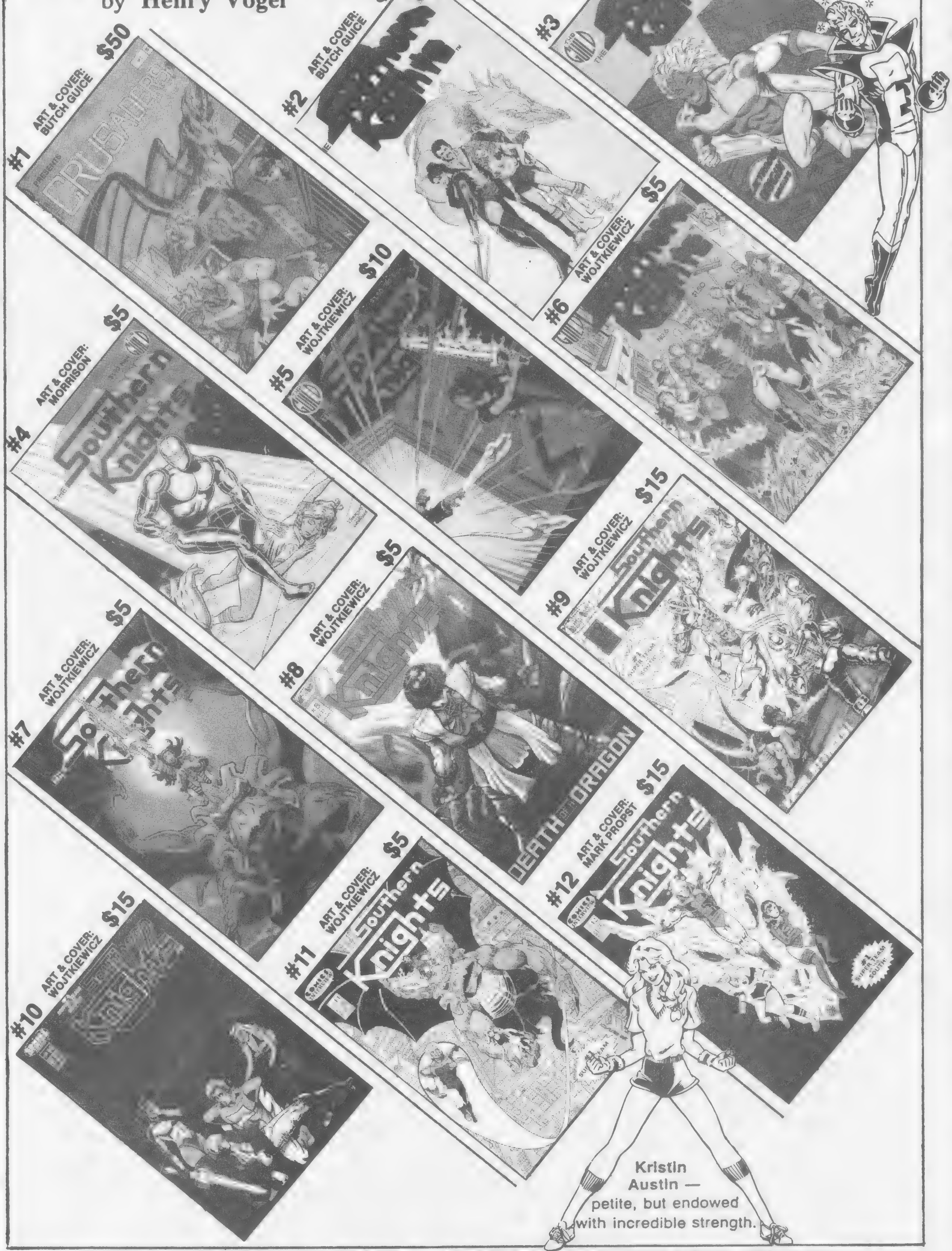
11 Caption: They were criminals -- killers --
12 Crowd Guy: Stinkin' muties!
13 Caption: We moved in --

[11]



SOUTHERN KNIGHTS

by Henry Vogel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Southern Knights

David Shenk —
alias Electrode —
Atlanta's first
and foremost
protector.

Kristin
Austin —
petite, but endowed
with incredible strength.

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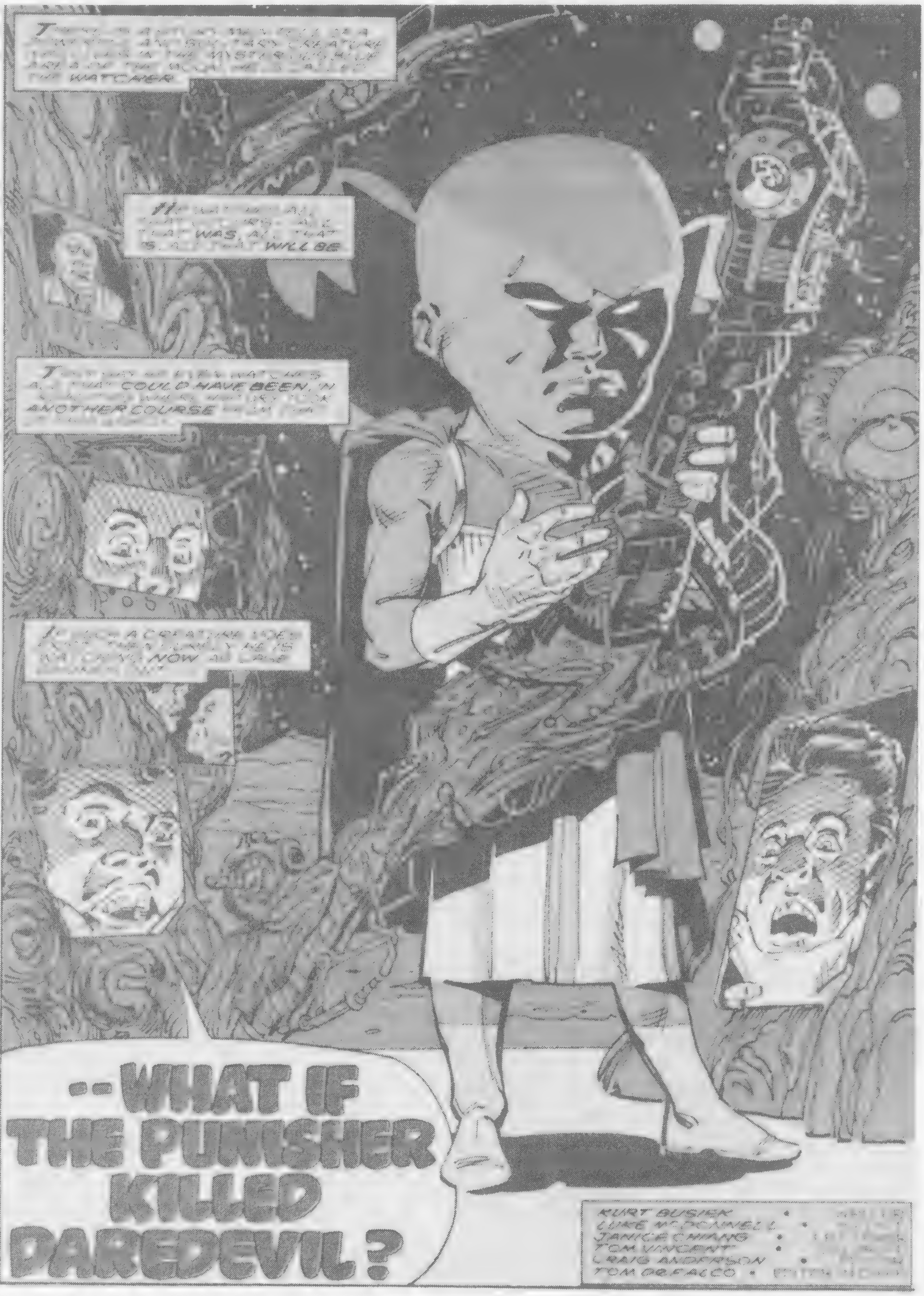
“I’m really stupid and anal-retentive about things.”

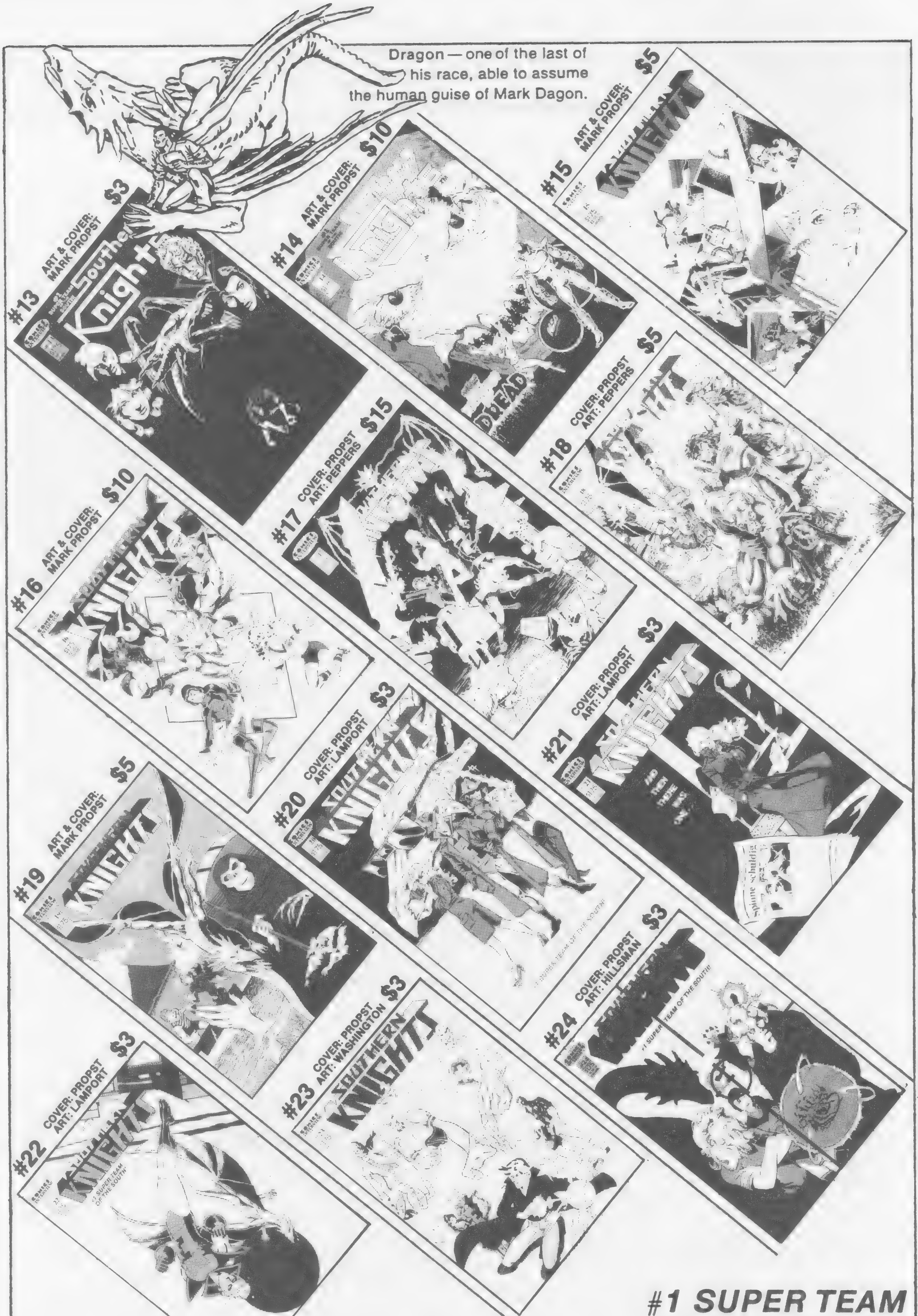
out a proposal, an anthology series that had as its focus this Phil Sheldon character who went around covering the news, taking photos and interacting with the superheroes from the vantage point of a normal person. And they rejected it.

LOU: *Ah!*

KURT: They didn’t exactly reject it. They asked for revisions. But it’s funnier to say they rejected it. Some people felt that the idea of starting back in World War II was starting too early; some people felt that doing continuity implant stories was a problem; some people felt we should’ve started by picking one hero or group, like, say, tell the early history of the Fantastic Four through painted artwork and make that the concept. It was **Tom DeFalco** who said, “Well, instead of coming up with new stories that show how this guy interacted with the heroes, why don’t you pick the major events of Marvel history and show his reaction to those? If you want to show us how normal people viewed the Marvel universe, show us the important stuff.” I sort of went, “Myahhahhahhh” *(Laughter)*, because I realized how much research that was gonna be. Because I’m really stupid and anal-retentive about such things. Every time I did an issue of WHAT IF?, I tried to figure out not only what was going on in the book I was spinning a WHAT IF? off of, but what was going on in everything else as well. So that if Spider-Man came in, I could make reference to what


THE WATCHER
WAS, ALL THAT
WILL BE
COULD HAVE BEEN
ANOTHER COURSE
NOW
--WHAT IF THE PUNISHER KILLED DAREDEVIL?
KURT BUSIEK
LUKE McDONNELL
JANICE CHIANG
TOM VINCENT
CRAIG ANDERSON
TOM DEFALCO

An example of Kurt’s “What If?” scripting — from the June 1991 issue (#26) “What If the Punisher Killed Daredevil?” The artwork, both pencils and inks, is by Luke McDonnell.



Dragon — one of the last of his race, able to assume the human guise of Mark Dagon.

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#18 COVER: PROPST ART: PEPPERS **$5**

#19 ART & COVER: MARK PROPST **$5**

#20 COVER: PROPST ART: LAMPORT **$3**

#21 COVER: PROPST ART: LAMPORT **$3**

#22 COVER: PROPST ART: LAMPORT **$3**

#23 COVER: PROPST ART: WASHINGTON **$3**

#24 COVER: PROPST ART: HILLSMAN **$3**

#1 SUPER TEAM OF THE SOUTH!

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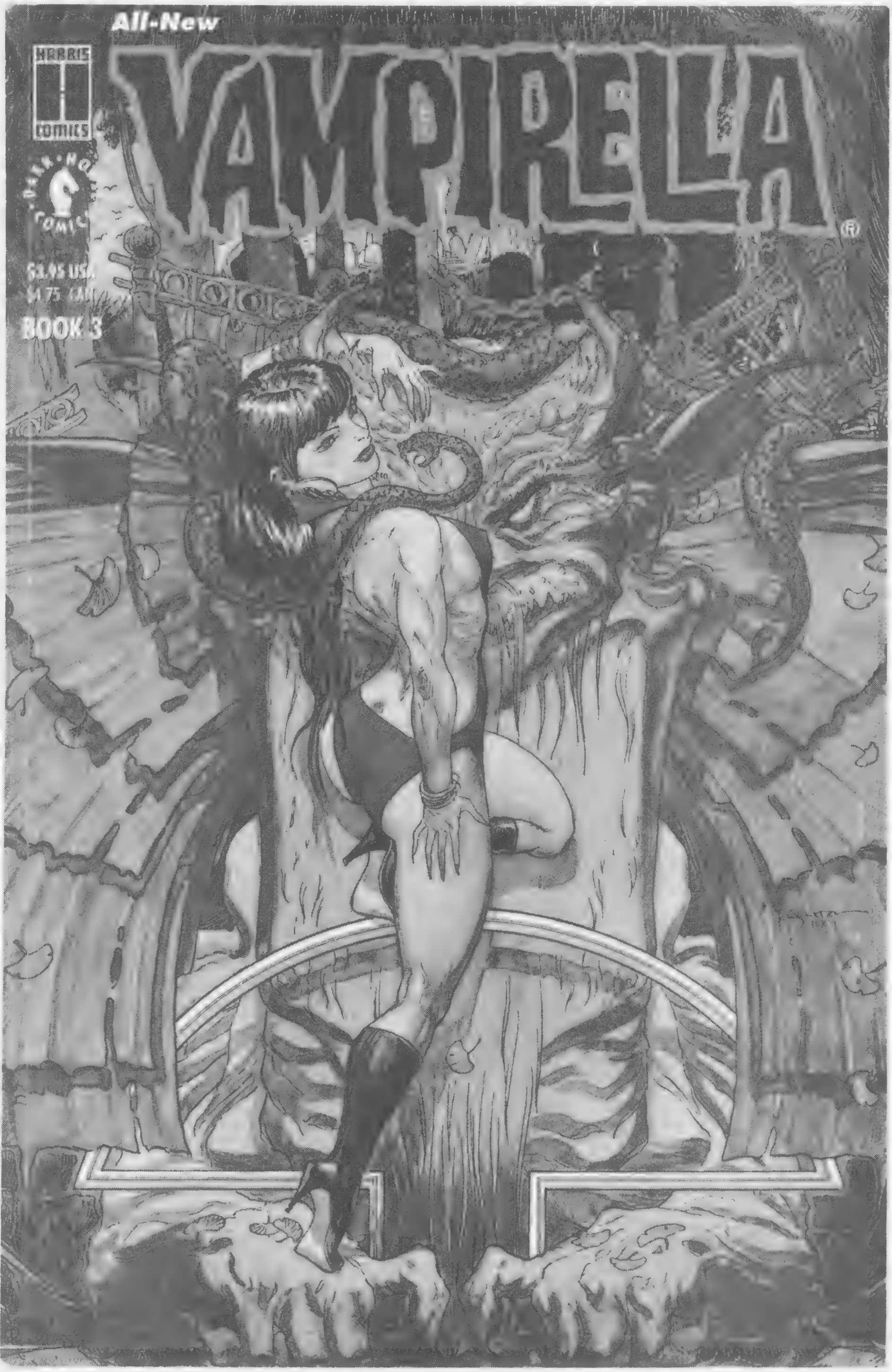
"Snapshot portraits of the scope of the Marvel Universe."

was going on in his book at the time, or the Fantastic Four, or whatever. And I was certainly gonna do that with this.

And so that birthed MARVELS as not merely a look at the important events of the Marvel Universe through the eyes of a normal person, but basically snapshot portraits of what the entire scope of the Marvel Universe was at the time of those major events. What else was going on when Galactus came to Earth the first time? What else was going on when the Sentinels happened?

LOU: *Speaking of the Sentinels, I thought it was kind of a crowded time-line to have Professor X's debate with Bolivar Trask and the debut of the Sentinels happening maybe at 6 p.m. of the*



M.W. Kaluta's detailed cover illustration for the third book of VAMPIRELLA: "Morning in America" (from Harris Publications). Kurt scripted this 48-pager — with artwork provided by Chance, Nyberg, Doran, T. Robbins, Leialoha, Infantino, K. Jones, S. Shaw, Fry & Howell.

VAMPIRELLA® Harris Publications, Inc.

"According to what's actually there, the X-Men

same day that, earlier on, they got finished with the Fantastic Four's wedding and the big brouhaha with everybody in the Marvel Universe around at, maybe, 3:00 in the afternoon.

KURT: That's the only way it can work. According to what's actually there in the books, the X-Men actually attended the Fantastic Four's wedding (in FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #3) and they are uninjured. At the end of the Juggernaut story (in X-MEN #13), which predates the wedding, they're all injured. At the beginning of the Sentinels story (X-MEN #14), they're still injured. They go off on vacation, but before they can get fully gone the debate happens and the Sentinels attack. And at the end of that story, they're all injured again! *(Laughter.)* And at the beginning of the next story (X-MEN #17), they're still injured. *(Laughter.)* And Magneto is capturing the Angel's parents, while Iceman is still in the hospital. So during that sweep of months, the only time they could have attended the Fantastic Four's wedding is the afternoon before the Sentinels struck.

LOU: *And you heard it first here, folks! But one thing that I wanted to mention is that, of course, when people talk about MARVELS, they talk about Alex Ross's painted art. Everybody's calling him "Marvel's secret weapon." But without your story in this thing, without the treatment of Phil Sheldon and the humanistic point of view, including his love story in the '40s, his selling the book of photos, and his reaction to Gwen Stacy's death, all of that as underpinnings of the book, all you would have, basically, is pretty pictures. And it seems to me that MARVELS ended up as something more than that, because of your treatment of Phil's character. Care to comment on that one?*

KURT: Sure. One of the things I've been very, very pleased by, in terms of the reaction to MARVELS, is that people have been saying, "Oh, man, this is a beautifully painted book. I love the artwork. But the story is just as good." And consistently, the reaction has been that while the artwork is gorgeous, the story is also very good, that MARVELS just wouldn't have worked if the writing hadn't been up to the level of the artwork. So I'm glad people feel that way; I'm glad people noticed. We put a lot of work into that. The concept, as we worked it out, was going to be a human's-eye-view of the Marvel Universe. And I wasn't going to satisfy myself with just pictures of guys on the streets with their mouths hanging open. MARVELS was a challenge — it had to be stories that I did not know how to write. So I had to figure out how to write 'em! *(Laughter.)* And it certainly seems to have gone over well, and I want to do more material like it. I don't know what to say beyond the fact that I beat up on myself until I could get the story to come out the way I wanted it. And it seems that the readers out there wanted that sort of thing, even if they didn't know it. Because once it came out, they just embraced it.

But let's face it, without the artwork, it would have been impossible to sell a series like this. If I had gone in and said, "I want to do a series about a dumpy little balding Jewish guy who wanders around the Marvel Universe taking pictures of people, and we see how it affects his family life, and we'll find an artist for it," then I would have been told, "Yechh! Go away!"

LOU: *Just as a trivia bit, I wanted to check with you — in one of those Atlantean craft in the fourth issue, on one of the pages there — page 26, panel 1 — is that Nite Owl and Silk Spectre from WATCHMEN jockeying one of those things?*

KURT: Not if there are any lawyers reading this.

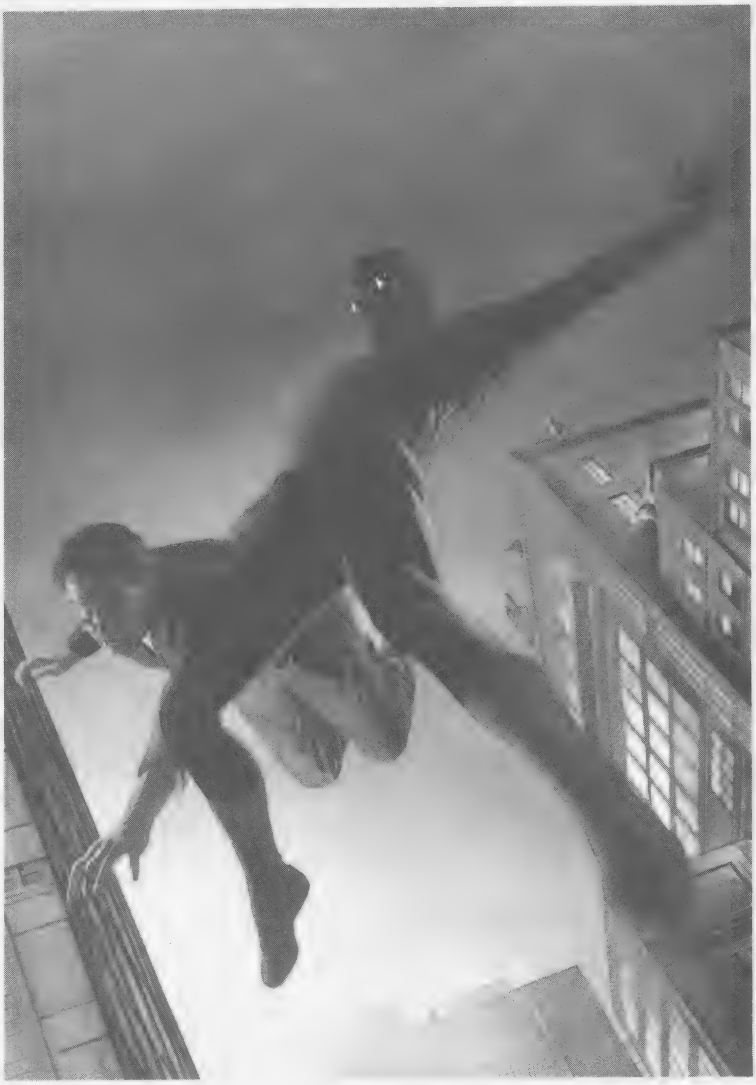
LOU: *Okay.*

KURT: No comment! *(Laughter.)* What were we talking about?

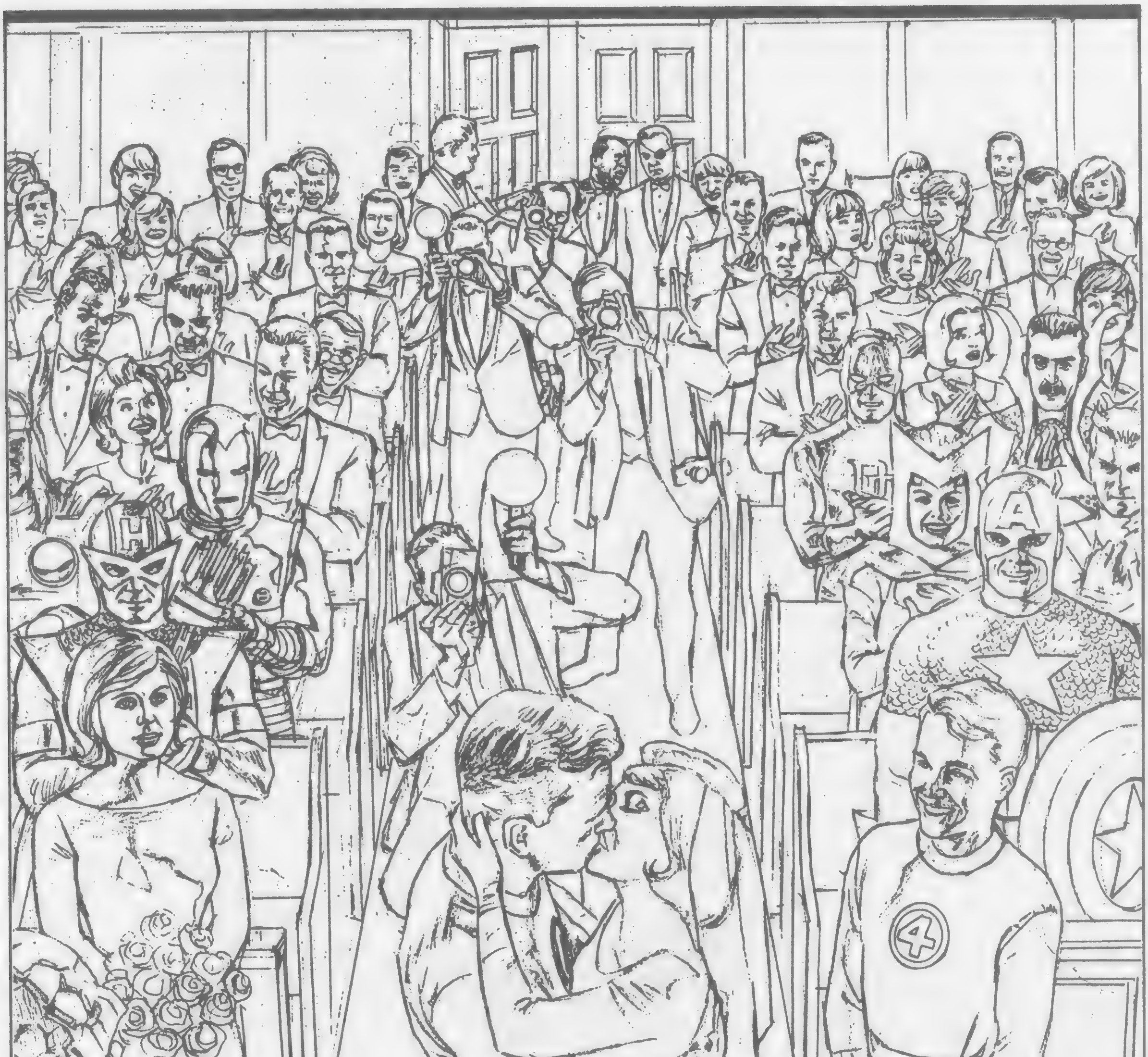
LOU: *We were talking about MARVELS.*

KURT: Okay, given that we found a way

Alex Ross' painted re-creation of Jack Kirby (design and pencils) and Steve Ditko's (inks) cover to AMAZING FANTASY #15.



attended the Fantastic Four's wedding, uninjured."



What do the television shows GILLIGAN'S ISLAND, THE BEAUTY & THE BEAST and THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW, along with The Beatles and The Mothers of Inventions' late founder/leader, Frank Zappa, have in common with this, the 33rd page of MARVELS, Book Two? They're all present at this wedding of Sue Storm and Reed Richards! Probably the two most appropriate entertainers-turned-superhero (by Ross) are Zappa as Doctor Strange and "The Professor" (actor Russell Johnson) as Mr. Fantastic. Note: Linda Hamilton is definitely in her pre-TERMINATOR state — i.e., Beauty & the Beast guise.

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS

by Henry Vogel

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Connie Ronnin — wielder of the psychic sword.

#1 SUPER TEAM OF THE SOUTH!

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“I’ve gotten an enormous career boost out of MARVELS.”

to get this kind of story launched, people have seemed to realize that they really like this kind of story. They really liked the human approach, the human-level slant to things, and they want to see more of it.

LOU: *And now DC is doing a series with Alex, which is doing something like MARVELS from the DC Universe standpoint. Am I right?*

KURT: No. Alex is doing a series for DC. It is similar to MARVELS in format, in that it’s gonna be four issues, extra length. It’s similar to MARVELS in scope in that it involves a huge sweep of the DC Universe. And it does involve different perspectives on superheroes than that which you are used to, but it is not “DCS.” It is not simply the concept of MARVELS translated to DC. **Mark Waid,** the writer, is better than that, and Alex doesn’t have the interest in just doing it all over again with different costumes. It is its own thing. I won’t tell you too much about it, since it’s not actually my project.

LOU: *Right, don’t worry.*

KURT: It’s terrific, and you can tell anybody reading this interview that they should look forward to it with bated breath, even though it is not MARVELS at DC.

LOU: *Can you briefly tell us about your decision not to get involved with the sequel to MARVELS?*

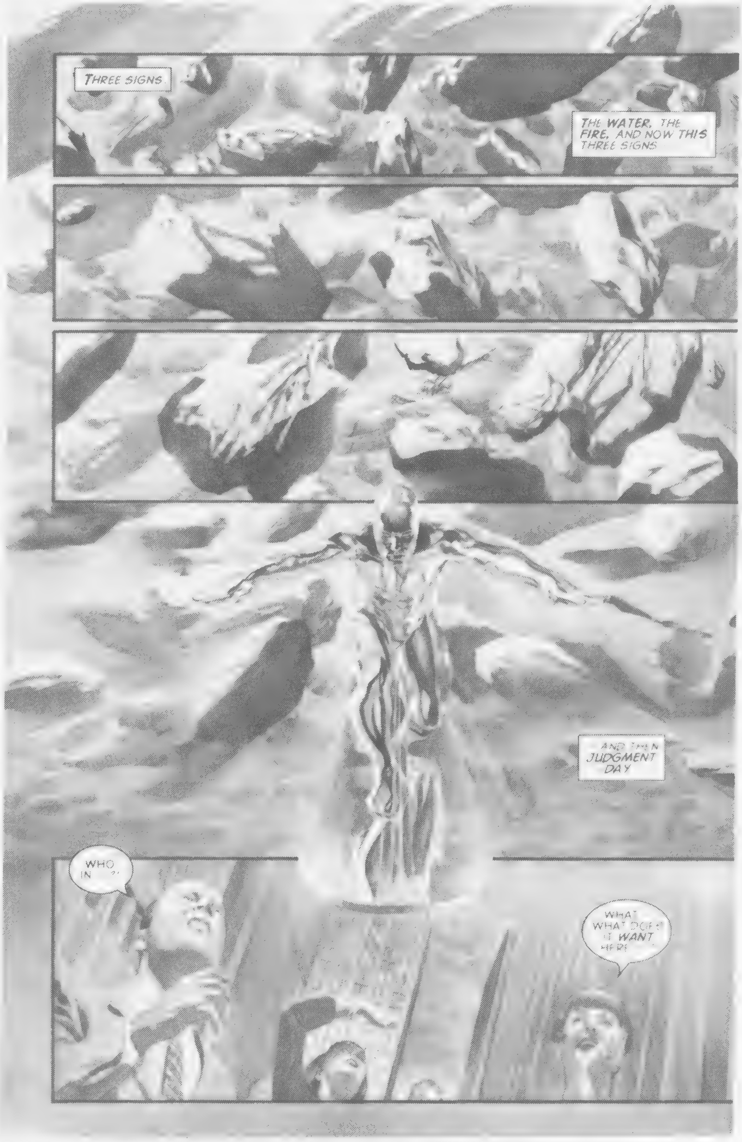
KURT: I originally got involved in the sequel to MARVELS, which was something of a mistake. Not for any legal reasons or anything like that, but purely for creative reasons. I spent two years challenging myself to find a way to tell this kind of story, and by the end of it I had figured out what my approach was to this kind of story. Unfortunately, my approach requires somebody like Alex doing the artwork. The artist they selected for it, **Tristan Schane,** is a terrific artist and is going to do sensational work on MARVELS II. But his storytelling strengths are not Alex’s, and vice versa. He needs a different approach than I was able to deliver. Whether it was because I had found the particular vision that I had, or dug myself into a rut, or however you want to say it, my vision of how this kind of story was supposed to work was so entwined with the experience of working with Alex that I couldn’t adjust the script. The end result would be that either Tristan would be forced to do less than his best work, or the story as I envisioned it wouldn’t come through. So either way, the project would be hurt. Since there isn’t exactly a pile of artists out there who can paint like Alex and do 180 pages in a year and a half, I figured it would be better for the project for Marvel to find a writer who was coming at it fresh, to find that shared vision of what Marvel superheroes mean to him and Tristan, just as Alex and I found our particular shared vision and made the project work.

I don’t think MARVELS should be formula. I think MARVELS should be heartfelt. It’s just that, having seen 200 pages of what Alex and I feel about the Marvel Universe, it’s time to see 200 pages of what Chuck and Tristan feel deeply about the Marvel Universe.

LOU: *Yeah. In other words, you’ve made your statement and now it’s time for someone else to make theirs.*

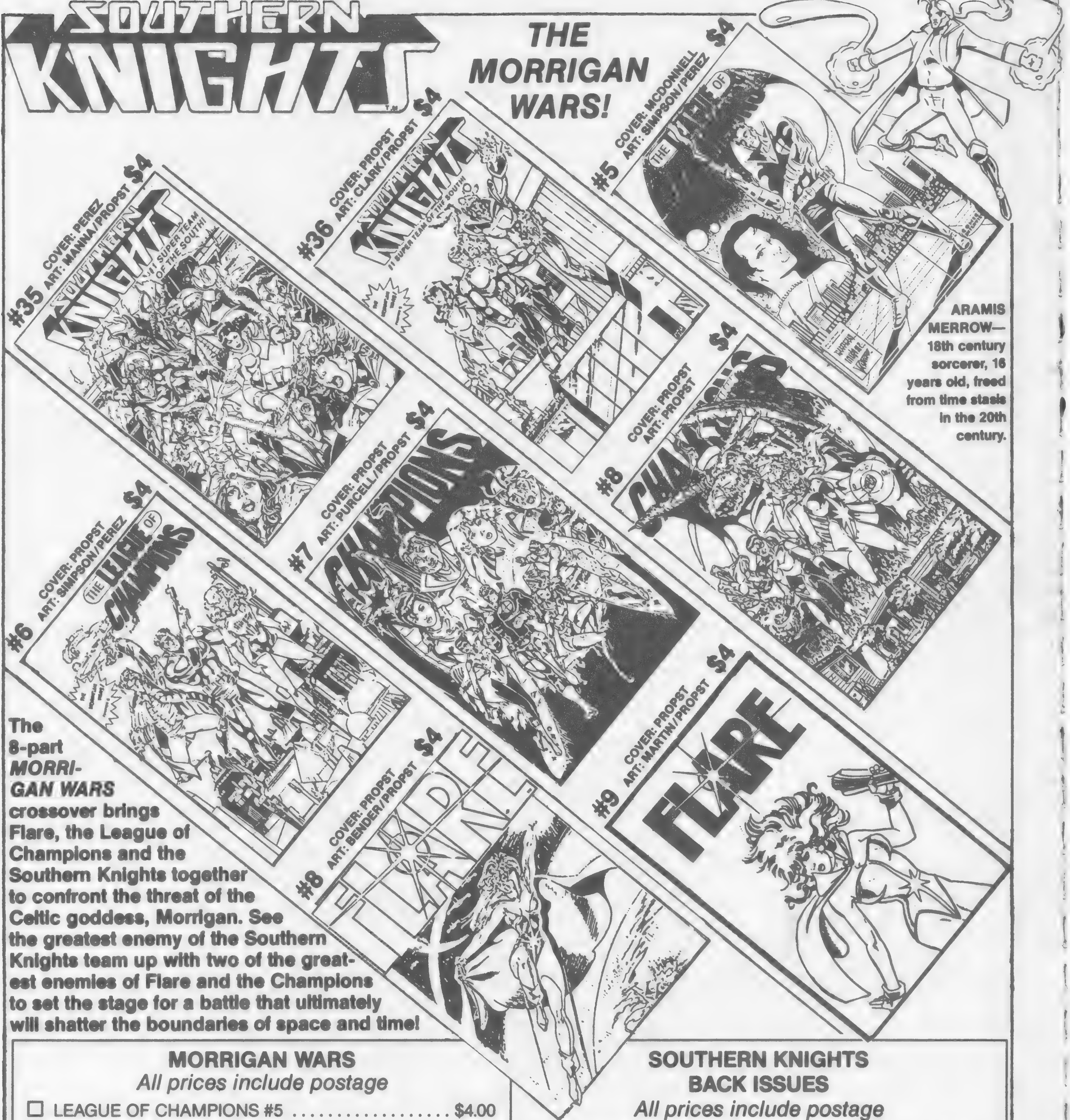
KURT: Right. And if I want to do something like that in the future, I will do it in my own way, exploring different depths and different directions, rather than trying to recreate something that was just fine the way it was and will exist and be in print in book form for a long time. I’ve gotten an enormous career boost out of doing MARVELS. I don’t need to hang on to the name. If Marvel wants to do a sequel, then terrific, let’s see what they can do. But let’s make it something that stands on its own, rather than make it a lesser imitation of something that went before.

NEXT ISSUE: ***Busiek reveals behind-the-scenes stories of comics, including a passel of stuff for Image . . .***


THREE SIGNS
THE WATER, THE FIRE, AND NOW THIS THREE SIGNS
AND THEN JUDGMENT DAY
WHO IN
WHAT WHAT DOES IT WANT HERE

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS

THE MORRIGAN WARS!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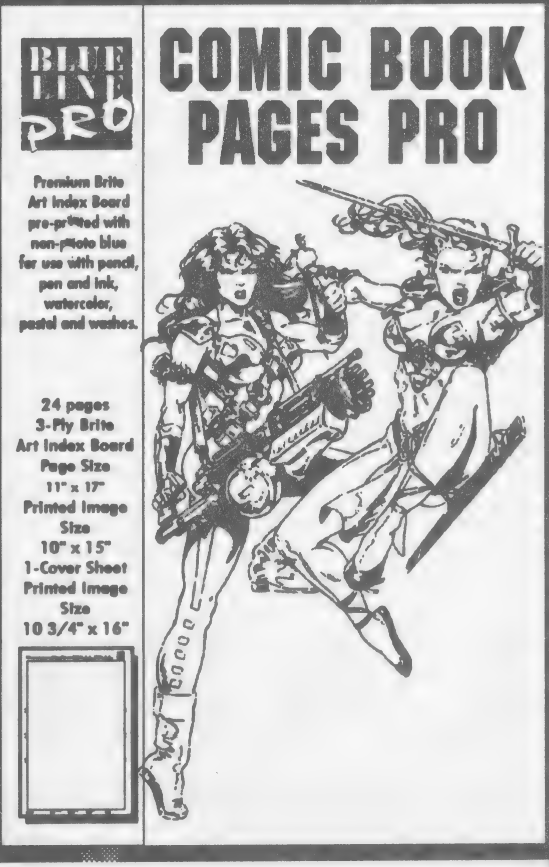

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"This is an homage to Kirby, as the Fantastic Four."

I was not a fan of BEANWORLD per se until I learned that Larry Marder was going to be at the Summer 1994 Dallas Fantasy Fair (along with a host of other Image people — sounds like a disco group, doesn't it?) and requested several issues from Eclipse to familiarize myself with his work for the interview. I was surprised and charmed by his creation, his cartooning ability (Marder is more a real "cartoonist" in the comic-strip sense rather than a "comic artist"), his characterization, and the well-thought-out environment for his characters. On top of that, he's got enough business sense and advertising acumen to make himself a vital part of Image's new workings, as well as helping other creators, such as Jeff (BONE) Smith, make that vital link-up to prodom. And on top of that, he's a nice and intelligent guy. So I woke him up Sunday morning at the con and we proceeded to have this conversation . . .

LOU MOUGIN: *Okay, Larry, first off, I want you to indulge my curiosity here. Can you explain the various features of the Inspiration Constellation?*

LARRY MARDER: I absolutely can. I have four personal influences. They are Native American mythology and culture, and this (the portion of the Constellation at bottom) is my version of a Hopi Kachina doll in a vegetable mode. These are like little niblets of corn, and this is sort of a floral mode that they sometimes use. This (another feature) is the Wasp Cylinder from THE LARGE GLASS, by **Marcel Duchamp**, done BEANWORLD style. This (feature at upper left) is an homage to **Robert Crumb,** and this (feature at upper right) is an homage to **Jack Kirby**, as the Fantastic Four.

LOU: *And the connectors here — I don't know if you'd call it mitochondria, but is this music connecting them, or what?*

LARRY: No, that is actually a form of patterning I use in other places in BEANWORLD, and they are visual clues. They are iconic clues of things that will tie together and make sense to readers at a later date. I'm big on that.

LOU: *Well, I don't feel as dumb as I thought now, because I was able to decipher the clues about the FF, and I thought, "Well, maybe this is Indian, kind of a Hopi thing," and the other thing, the closest I could come was, "Well, this looks like a kind of Robert Crumb thing —"*

LARRY: A little bit of **Crumb,** and a little bit of **Rick Griffin.**

LOU: *— but not being as well-grounded in the fine arts as I should be . . .*

LARRY: No, I don't expect anybody to get . . .

LOU: *Yeah, I'm certainly glad you explained the Duchamp thing to me!* (Laughter.) *I guess the first question is, will you tell our pantin' public the future plans and whereabouts of BEANWORLD?*

LARRY: Well, I'm working on a 60-page BEANWORLD story right now. It doesn't even have a working title yet; I've just been slowly putting it together. It will be printed as one squarebound volume with a spine. It should be out in the late spring or early summer of 1995, and it will be the first totally self-published project under Beanworld Press.

LOU: *That's your own imprint?*

LARRY: Mm-hmm.

LOU: *Now that Eclipse has sort of gone belly-up.*

LARRY: Well, let's just say they've suspended their comic-book line. They still exist.

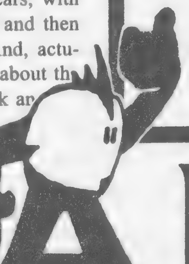
Photo by Lou Mougin

LARRY MARDER

VITAL STATISTICS

Born: 29 May, 1951 — Chicago, IL

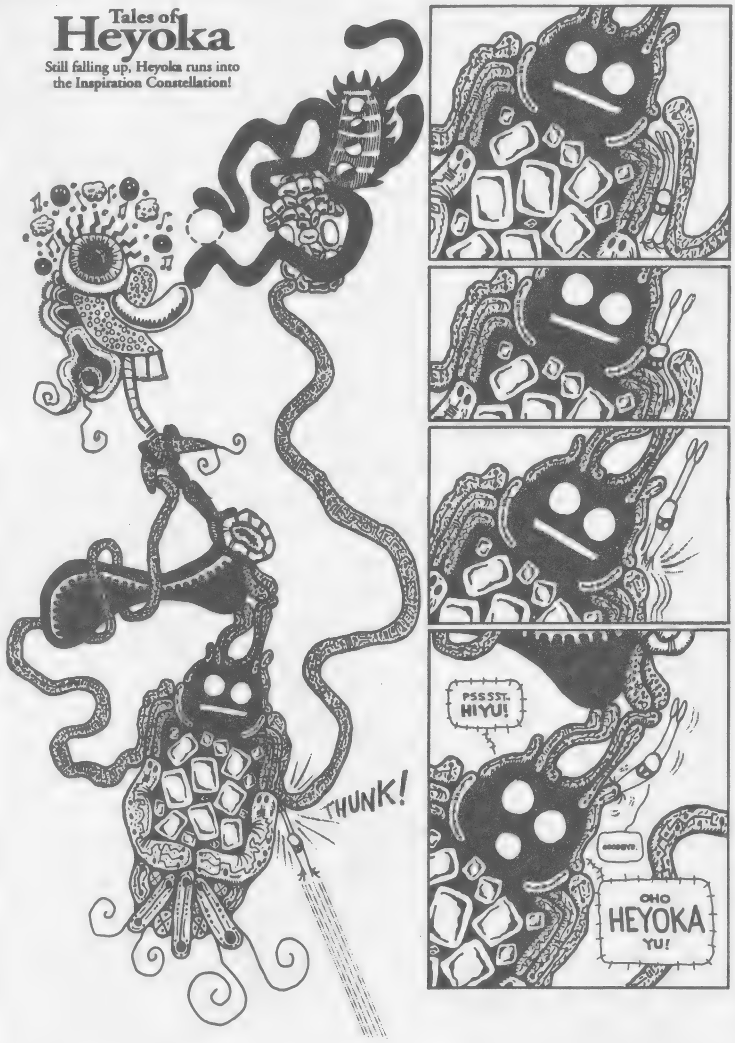
Family Configuration: Wife: Cory. She's put up with a tremendous amount over the years, with me having a regular job and then doing BEANWORLD. And, actually, when I was talking about th balance between my work an art, well, my work and my normal life, that's where the balance comes in.



Favorite Feature of the Beanworld: I like drawing all the doodling and noodling that's in Gran'Ma'Pa and the sprout buds and all that stuff. I complain a lot about it when I'm doing it, but I go into a zone when I'm doing that. And then it's like, you keep doing that and doing that, and making these weird shapes and these weird patterns. I find that very exciting.

All artwork accompanying this interview ©1994 Larry Marder, unless otherwise noted.

"I'm working on a 60-page BEANWORLD story."


Tales of Heyoka
Still falling up, Heyoka runs into the Inspiration Constellation!
THUNK!
PSSSST. HIYU!
OHO HEYOKA YU!

Larry's "Inspiration Constellation" spread from TALES OF THE BEANWORLD #19 (1991). This piece features a multiple tribute — Robert Crumb and the late Jack "King" Kirby.

LOU: *But the suspension is forcing you to turn elsewhere. Now that I've covered BEANWORLD's future, I'd like to get to the past. Isn't this a great transition?* (Laughter.) *I'm interested in your origins in advertising, Larry, and particularly that well-founded art knowledge that you evinced by that article you did in AMAZING HEROES about Marcel Duchamp.*

LARRY: Okay. Well, first of all, most of it just comes from the fact that I went to art school, the Hartford Art School in Hartford, Connecticut. And it wasn't a technical art school; it was a fine art school. In other words, they trained dilettantes. *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *And hopefully working artists.*

LARRY: And working artists. But it was the typical art school thing in our freshman foundation class, the first day of school, that one of our teachers said, "There are fifty people in this room. Ten of you will be gone by the end of this year. Only ten people in this room will graduate from this school. And only one of you will make a living as an artist." And he was right about that. A few more than ten of us graduated, but not many more. And I wanted to be one of those people who made a living as an artist. I really didn't at first, because like I said, it wasn't a technical or vocational school. So I didn't really study advertising there. Advertising was something that I fell into, working on the school newspaper, and eventually I became the editor of the school art magazine. Anyway, in my college education, we spent a lot of our time just studying art history. And the one thing that fascinated me more than anything else was the art of the 20th century, where, as the camera replaced the artist's responsibility to record reality — which is a *very* liberating thing, if you think about it — art began to explore. Instead of recording a form, it became the exploration of ideas. **Duchamp** was probably the most key person in studying idea over form at the turn of the century. He's an enormous influence on the avant-garde, anywhere from the music of **John Cage** to the **Talking Heads** to, certainly, **John Lennon** through **Yoko Ono. Yoko Ono** was —

LOU: *A Duchamp fan?*

LARRY: — a **Duchamp** acolyte in every sense. She knew him; she was around him. Like all great masters, what they plan on doing and what their followers do are usually two separate things. But that's what I got interested in. But the main thing was, I was in art school, and most of the people wanted to be painters or sculptors. There was one other cartoonist in my school, and that was **David Wenzel,** the guy who did THE HOBBIT. He was a year ahead of me, and because we were both cartoonists, it was competitive. But we did have a certain bond. But Dave, as anybody knows from looking at his artwork, was really into the idea of rendering.

I, on the other hand — it was sort of a revelation from looking at SPIDER-MAN. And that was that the facial expressions were irrelevant to telling the story. Because in those days, particularly, Spider-Man had no facial expressions.

LOU: *Was this the Ditko or the Romita Spider-Man?*

LARRY: Well, actually, in those days it was probably **Ross Andru.** But it was all the same, in the sense that, when Spider-Man was in costume, story was told through dialogue and gesture. Body position and gesture. So it was like, "You can do this. You don't need to have faces to communicate emotion; you can do these things." And I just decided, "Well, that's pretty interesting." So, again, because I was so influenced by the concept of idea over form, I eventually through some doing came up with this basic bean character. Which was a total attempt to eliminate rendering from storytelling. In other words, if somebody would say, "It was really a good story, but his foreshortening was wrong, his shadowing was wrong, the folds in the clothing were wrong," — well, then, *eliminate* that stuff! Can you eliminate those things and still tell a story

“It was a revelation, looking at Spider-Man. Facial

that will move people? And that was the beginning of my journey which started in art school and obviously continues today. I thought I was doing simple comics until I saw **Matt Feazell**, the artist of CYNICALMAN, and then I said, “Wow, I'm doing a lot of rendering!” *(Laughter.)*

LOU: *Yeah, relatively speaking. But his thing is, you know, stripping everything down to just the stick figure, and yours is more of the comic-strip art. I would hate to say the “humoresque,” but if I would compare it to something, I wouldn't say Charlie Schulz, but in that school.*

LARRY: Well, it is a bigfoot comic. There's no doubt about that. It is very simple. **Charlie Schulz** and many, many other people clearly — the drawings support the writing and ideas.

LOU: *Although if you think it's simple, you should try doing it yourself, because it's very hard to be simple.*

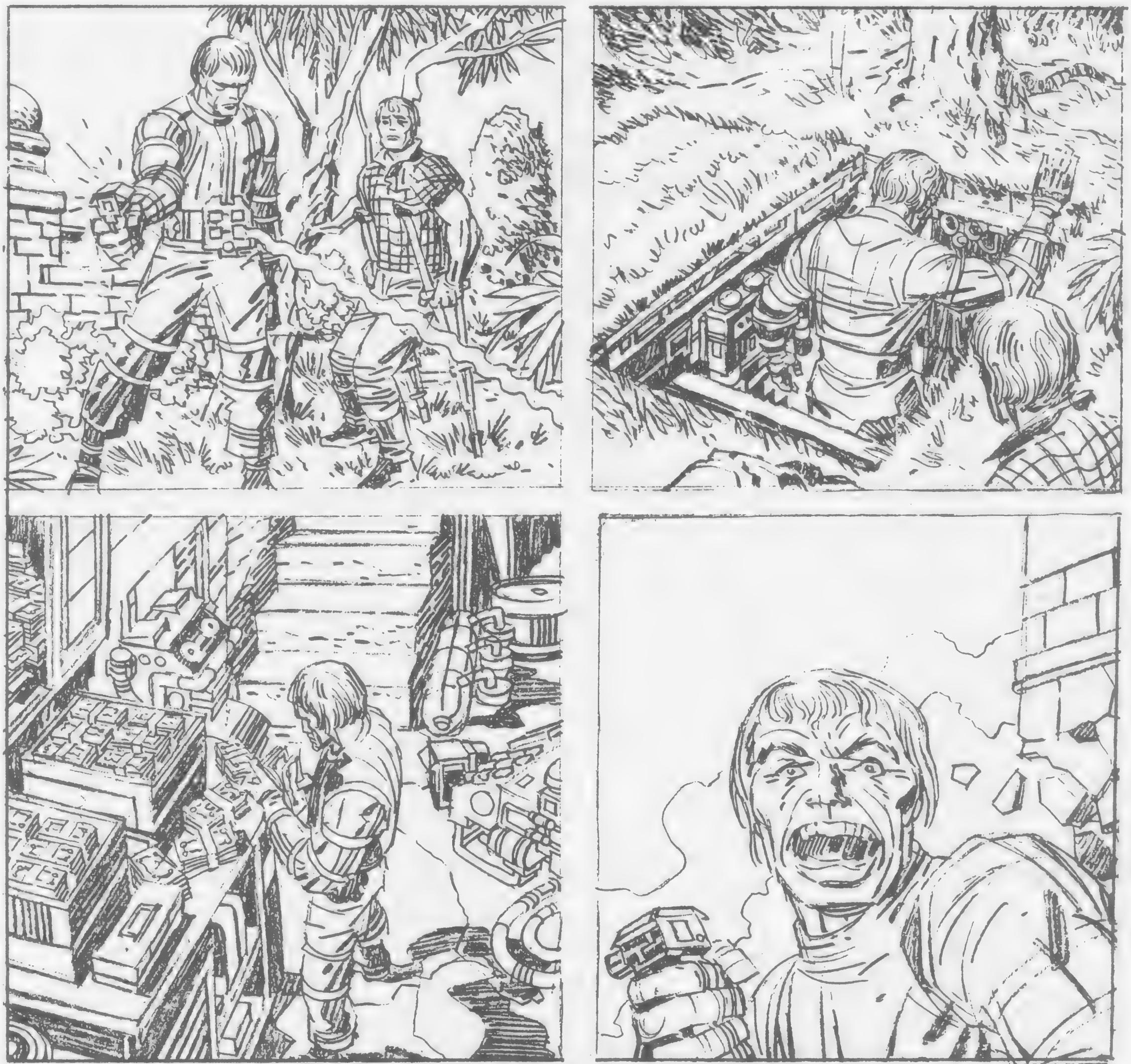
LARRY: It is hard to be simple, and the one thing that is very funny is, when people send in bean drawings, none of them draw beans the way that I do, but they all draw beans the same. They elongate them, or something else. Anyway, when you have drawn this basic bean figure, which is four circles high — and that always surprises people, that I still do use the same circling method as somebody who's drawing a human figure; it's four circles high, the body is two circles; the legs are two circles; and the knee comes in the middle of where those bottom two circles touch, and it always amuses people when they see me doing that.

LOU: *“How To Draw Beans The Larry Marder Way.”*

LARRY: *(Laughter.)* With an introduction by **Scott McCloud!**

LOU: *Right!*

LARRY: But when you've drawn these beans over and over and over again thousands and thousands and thousands of times, it almost becomes an experience to just do them as that, and have that simplicity. But in those days it wasn't as an experience. I was definitely struggling with something. And because there were beans all over my work station, they started calling me The Bean. And then I was working on a very primitive technology for typesetting headlines, which is long forgotten now in these days of



Speaking of The King — here's another of our exclusive looks at his raw genius — in pencil! Here, four never-used panels from FANTASTIC FOUR #108 “The Monstrous Mystery of the Nega-Man” — March 1971 cover date. Special note: Kirby's original name for the character was “Mega-Man” with his Mega-Power.

Fantastic Four ©1994 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

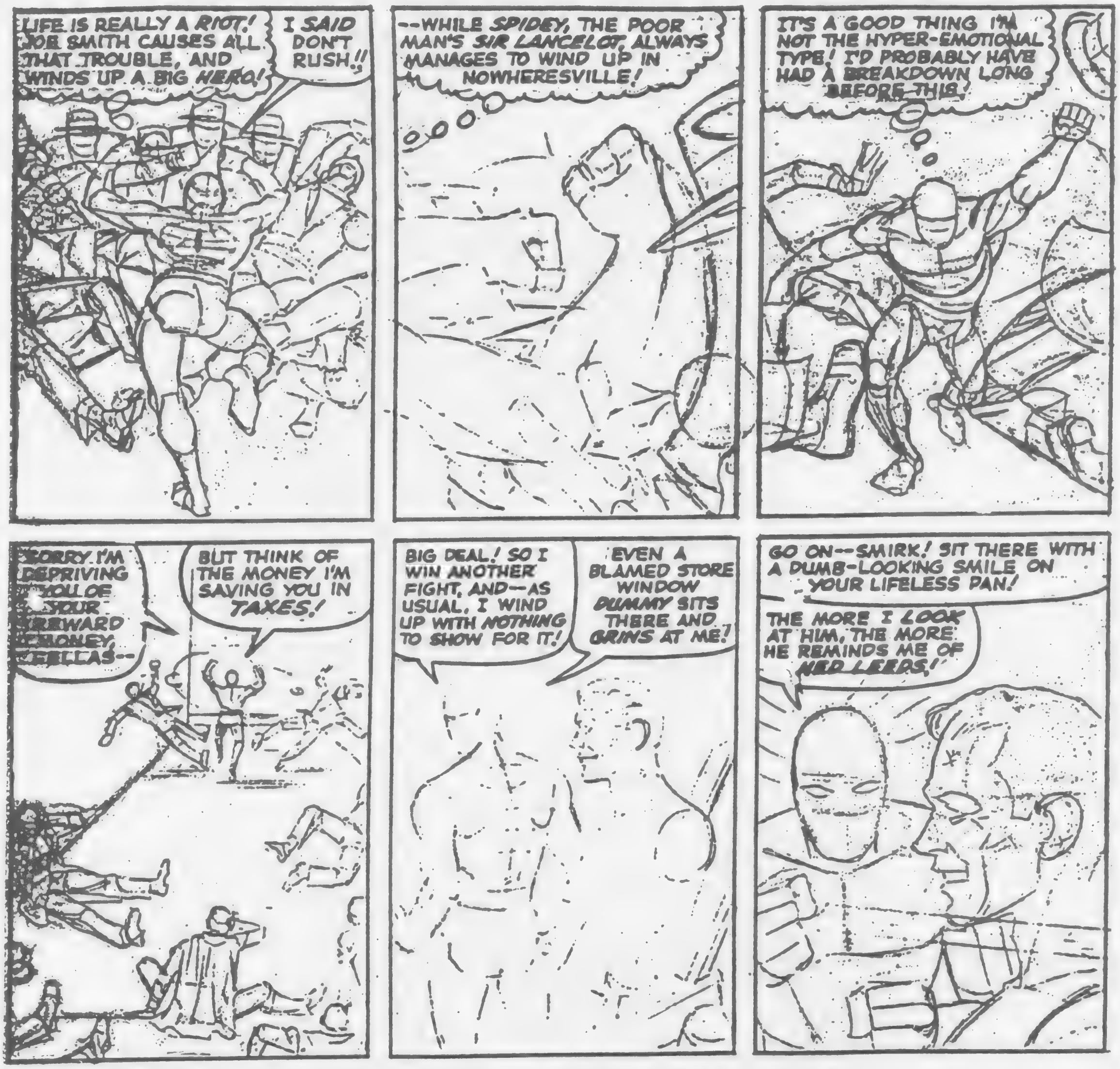
expressions were irrelevant to telling the story.”

desktop publishing. It was called a typositor, and you had to work in a darkroom. So I spent hours and hours and hours of the day in this very, very tight little broom closet, breathing these chemicals, a pretty uncomfortable high. And I called it “The Coal Mine.” but my fellow workers started calling it “The Bean's World.” And so, I put a sign on the door that said, “Bean World.” So I was doing beans, and there was this place where I worked that was called “Bean World.” But the idea that there would really be a place where the beans lived that would really be called Beanworld probably took about a year of this sort of back-and-forth.

And then, when I was growing a vegetable garden, in 1975 — I was living in Connecticut — I was watching these bean plants grow, and I said, “Oh, that's what I wanna do. I wanna do something that is the metaphor, or the poetic metaphor, of a bean plant growing.” And that is where I started with the idea that there is a Beanworld, and that it was a complicated world. But I started at the end of the cycle. I wasn't doing comics; I was just doing very, very large drawings that were all over my apartment, of, “These are things that will go on in the Beanworld.”

LOU: *Nailing down the concepts?*

LARRY: Nailing down the concepts. And then once I figured out how it all ended, I started moving backwards towards the beginning. And that movement, I wish I could tell you that it was real quick, but it was from 1975 to 1980. Five full years of investigating this stuff. And I went from the end to the beginning. And when I got to the beginning, at that point it all sort of clicked. The very last element, that I entered into the concept, into the mix, was Gran'ma'pa, which, of course, is the most central fixture in Beanworld. And once I did that, it was like everything made sense. And I just started drawing what became BEANWORLD #1. BEANWORLD #1 was the first full comic book that I ever drew. So BEANWORLD #21 was the twenty-first full comic book that I ever drew. Then the question became,


LIFE IS REALLY A RIOT! JOE SMITH CAUSES ALL THAT TROUBLE, AND WINDS UP A BIG HERO!
I SAID DON'T RUSH!!
--WHILE SPIDEY, THE POOR MAN'S SIR LANCELOT, ALWAYS MANAGES TO WIND UP IN NOWHERESVILLE!
IT'S A GOOD THING I'M NOT THE HYPER-EMOTIONAL TYPE! I'D PROBABLY HAVE HAD A BREAKDOWN LONG BEFORE THIS!
SORRY I'M DEPRIVING YOU OF YOUR REWARD MONEY, FELLAS--
BUT THINK OF THE MONEY I'M SAVING YOU IN TAXES!
BIG DEAL! SO I WIN ANOTHER FIGHT, AND--AS USUAL, I WIND UP WITH NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT!
EVEN A BLAMED STORE WINDOW DUMMY SITS THERE AND GRINS AT ME!
GO ON--SMIRK! SIT THERE WITH A DUMB-LOOKING SMILE ON YOUR LIFELESS PAN!
THE MORE I LOOK AT HIM, THE MORE HE REMINDS ME OF NED LEEDS!

Another of the former geniuses of Marvel Comics, Steve Ditko. (Since Spider-Man is mentioned, why not an example of the co-creator's* original version, right? Panels from the story “A Guy Named Joe,” 1965.)
*Jack Kirby and Stan Lee are the other two co-creators.

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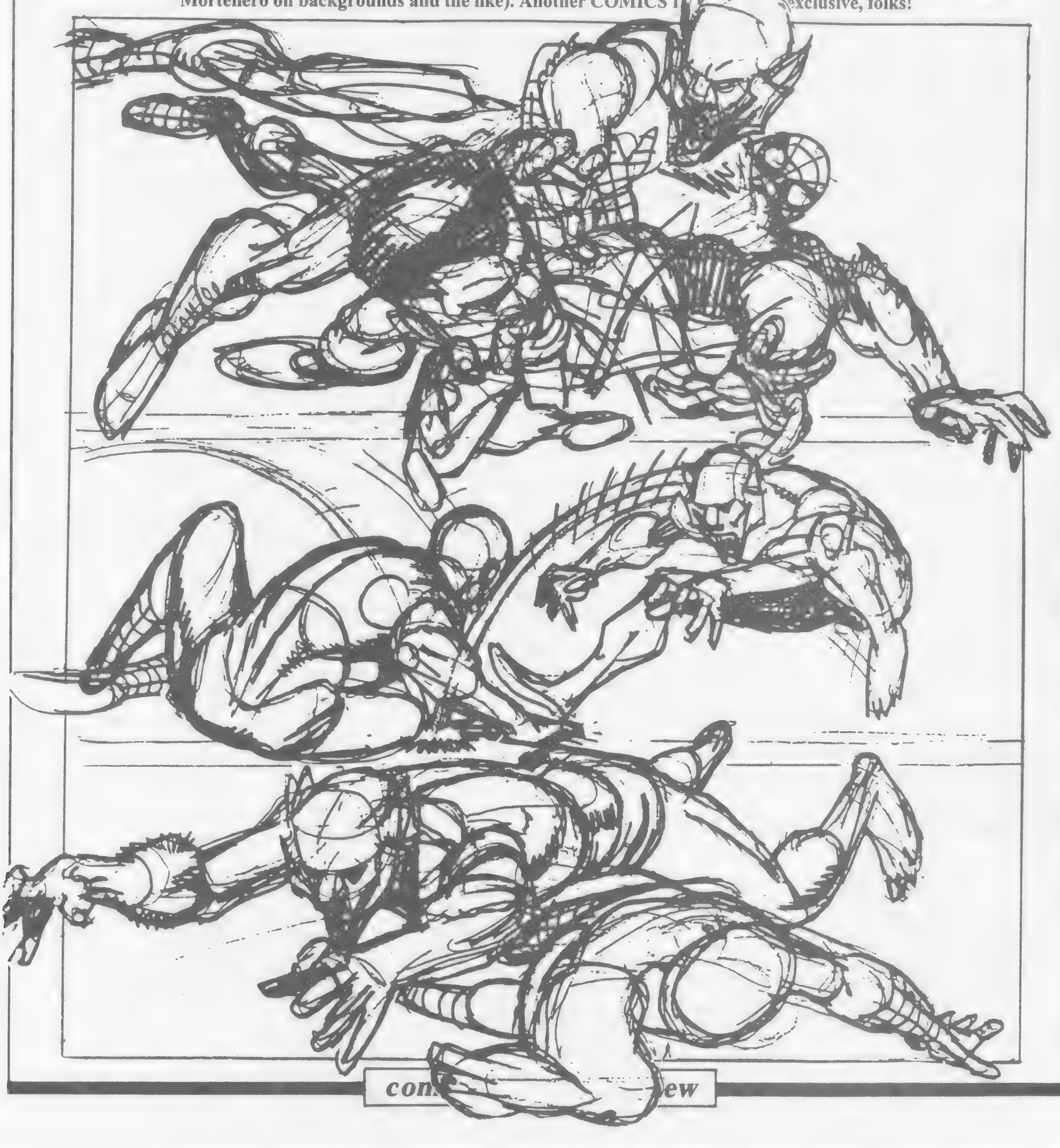
‘PAGE 9, in CBG, was from a suggestion

“What do you do with this?”

I was aware of ELFQUEST and CEREBUS, so it became apparent to me that you could self-publish, that you could do things that had previously seemed very uncommercial. So I broke up the first issue of BEANWORLD into eight-page chapters, which I xeroxed in an 8½x11-inch stapled format, and I started giving those away at conventions to professionals. And then I started giving them away to fans, whose addresses I would get from letters columns of books where I thought, “Well, these people like this book; they might appreciate my book.” So that stuff’s floating around out there somewhere.

But as far as how it came to be published: I was at Petuniacon IV, which was in the Bay Area, a sort of celebration of alternative comics, and I went there as a fan known to many of the pros who were there. And when I say pros, I mean people like **Jim Valentino,** who was on about the second issue of NORMALMAN, and others who had just crossed the barrier themselves out of fandom. And it was a very heady time. We really thought that alternative comics were really going to establish themselves and really whup everyone. And I had been in contact with **Cat Yronwode** for a while, because she had reviewed the BEANWORLD fanzine. And I went out there, and I met Cat and **Dean Mullaney,** and we got to chatting, and we sort of came to an agreement there that they would help me to distribute BEANWORLD. Because I wanted to be a self-publisher, and, actually, BEANWORLD has always been self-published. It’s always been financed with my money. If you read the indicia, you’ll see that it’s distributed by Eclipse Comics. The reason why the Eclipse logo went on the cover was because the distributors asked for that at that time. They

Oh, what the hell! Here’s an example of Gil “Sugar” Kane’s take on everybody’s favorite web-slinger, Spider-Man. From AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #124, September, 1973, page 13 (later inked by Romita Sr. himself — with an assist from Mortellero on backgrounds and the like). Another COMICS I[illegible] exclusive, folks!



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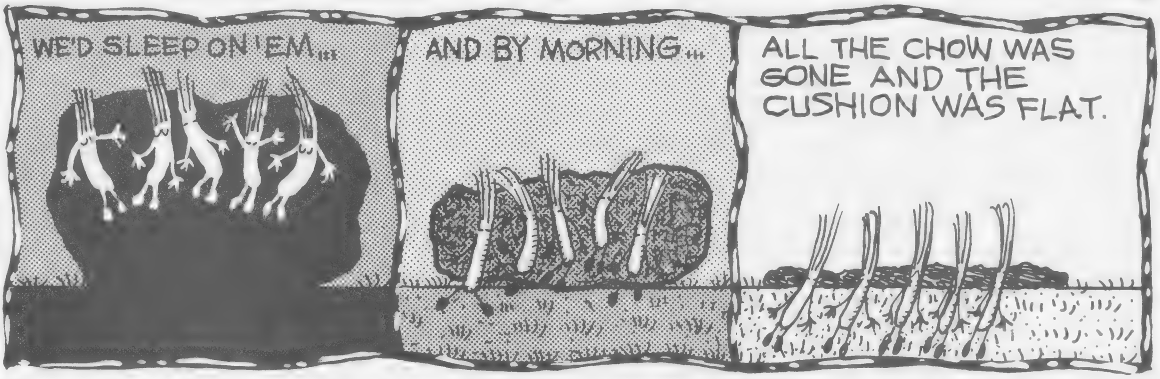
that I made. So was TOTAL ECLIPSE.”


WE'D SLEEP ON 'EM...
AND BY MORNING...
ALL THE CHOW WAS GONE AND THE CUSHION WAS FLAT.

thought there were too many companies, and they were particularly disturbed by comics that said one thing on the cover, and then they would get a bill from somebody else because of the distribution thing. So they asked me to do it, and I saw no harm in it at the time. So I just sort of went ahead and did it, and we solicited for BEANWORLD #1. It was always sort of a trade-off. They would distribute my comic, and they could pick my brain over advertising stuff. And some good things, some institutions, came out of that. PAGE 9, in CBG, was definitely from an off-the-wall suggestion that I made. So was the Total Eclipse, Total Satisfaction guarantee, which really helped establish —

LOU: *All that was yours?*

LARRY: All that was mine. But nobody ever knew it. *(Laughter.)* I mean, the public didn't know it, but it was known to the people that a lot of people knew behind the scenes. A lot of people in the industry would say, “Who did that?” “Oh, **Larry Marder.** He's that BEANWORLD guy.” “Really! I didn't know he knew how to do stuff like that!” And that's how I crept into the back door of the business end, where people would call me up a lot to pick my brain.

LOU: *And ask for advice on advertising and promotion?*

LARRY: Just how you think these things through. Or even as simple as, “I've got this idea — do you think it'll work?” Or, “I've got two ideas — which do you think is better?” And I did a lot of that for a long time. And I still do it a lot. Some people I do it for out of friendship, and some people because it's a job. But generally, most people who have paid me for doing it as a job — they may not be paying me now, but I still talk to them, stuff like that.

LOU: *They're getting free stuff! Okay, folks, be sure and send him a check for all this stuff now!* (Laughter.) *So, since we've drifted into that, I may as well ask you how you fell into the Image position.*

LARRY: Well, the Image position was the same sort of thing, in the sense that — in that time, when Image formed, I was marketing director at Moondog's in Chicago. And **Gary Colabuono** started getting involved with and became a partner in the Chicago ComiCon. And one of the things they wanted to do to make the con spectacular in 1992 was get some big-name guests. And then Image formed, and it's like, “Let's get *all* of them!” “Oh, that can't be done!” We tried, and **Jim Valentino** and I have been friends for a decade, and basically, it was sort of funny because the Image guys received a proposal which was from a comic-book convention to a publishing company. This was a business proposal, which I wrote, really from a creator to other creators. It had this different wrapping. but I sort of pressed the right buttons, so they decided to come. And that was my first real workings with all of Image. At that point,

STEP ASIDE AND I'LL CLOBBER IT GOOD!

"I worked with Extreme Studios on the Extreme Tour."

I didn't know any of them except for **Marc Silvestri** and **Jim Valentino.** And in the summer of '92, as I worked with them, the entire comic-book convention committee came up with the idea of the Image tent and how it would be implemented, but I was always the liaison to them as the conventioneer. That went fine, and that was a very great moment both for Image and the Chicago Comi-Con. And then, as things went on, **Jim Lee** did his 24-Hour Tour, where he was at the East coast, the Midwest, and the West Coast within a 24-hour period.

LOU: *Must not have been much fun!*

LARRY: I think he had a lot of fun, actually, but I think he didn't get much sleep!

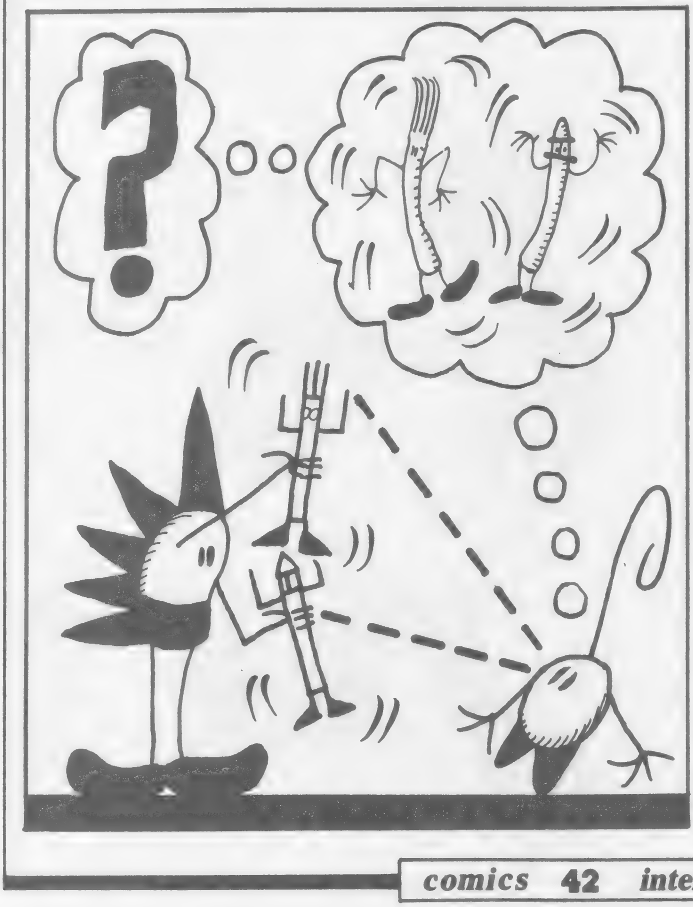
LOU: *Right.*

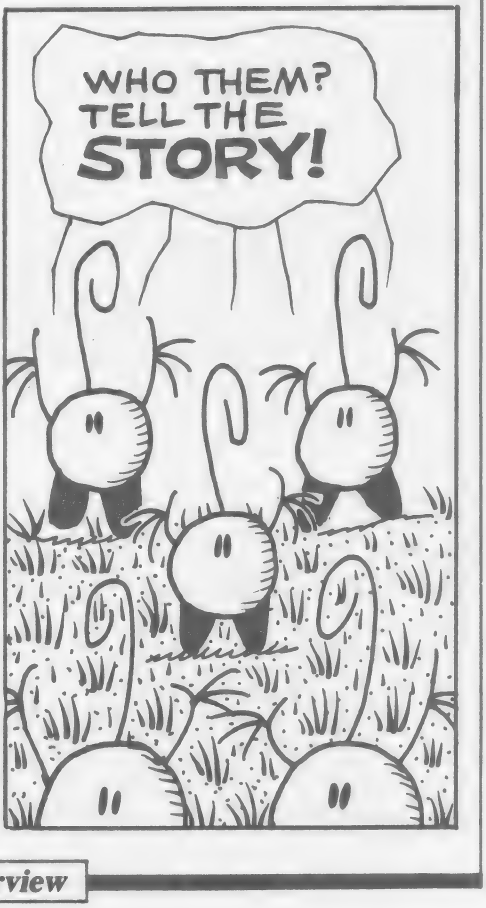
LARRY: But I worked on the Midwestern publicity for that. I worked with Extreme Studios on the Extreme Tour, and many, many other things in this capacity of marketing director of Moondog's. And that started a lot of phone relationships with various Image partners. So when the time rolled around to look for someone to basically help them give their organization some more internal discipline, because things were getting a little anarchistic — and there were so many returnable books, and there were so many things going wrong, and it's like, the more things went wrong, the more time they had to spend paying attention to their business, and that kept them away from the drawing board. It was becoming a vicious spiral.

LOU: *In other words, they had to have somebody to take care of the business while they were creating stuff.*

LARRY: Yeah. They wanted somebody that they could essentially entrust with the stewardship of the Image office, so they would only have to be consulted in times of emergency. And so that's what happened. I was leaving Moondog's at that time, and I fully intended to go back and spend more time on BEANWORLD. That was my intention. I don't think there was anything that could have kept me from doing that, except for the guys at Image, because I believed so much in why they did what they did when they left, how they formed Image, why it is in a lot of ways a company that's not a company, more of a union or a coalition. They needed some sort of figure that I called the "shuttle diplomat" at the time. It's like, "You need a shuttle diplomat; you need somebody who's always on the plane," to use the **Henry Kissinger** term, going from place to place to place to place, trying to keep the peace. And that's what I did.

The thing that's funny is, the reason why things didn't work, and the reason why they do work now, are the same reason. They basically installed in the Image office very young people that didn't know a lot about how the comic-book business worked. They're very bright young people, and they learned very quickly. So now you've got some really seasoned veterans who know their stuff, and they're under 25 years old. But the one thing that they don't have, which is so great, is they don't have Marvel or DC experience. They don't say, "That's now how you do it in the comic-book business! You can't do that! Oh, they won't like that! Oh, no, the distributors won't let you do that!" We know that we're making history, and we don't really care about the way that it's been done in the last six years. If the system over the last six years worked, Image would never have been formed. It doesn't work. So, therefore, it needed new ideas, new ways of doing things. *NEXT ISSUE: Part Two*




WHO THEM? TELL THE STORY!

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

150 MILLION UNSOLD COMICS! FEEDBACK SOUGHT FOR BOOK ON FIELD

Dear David;

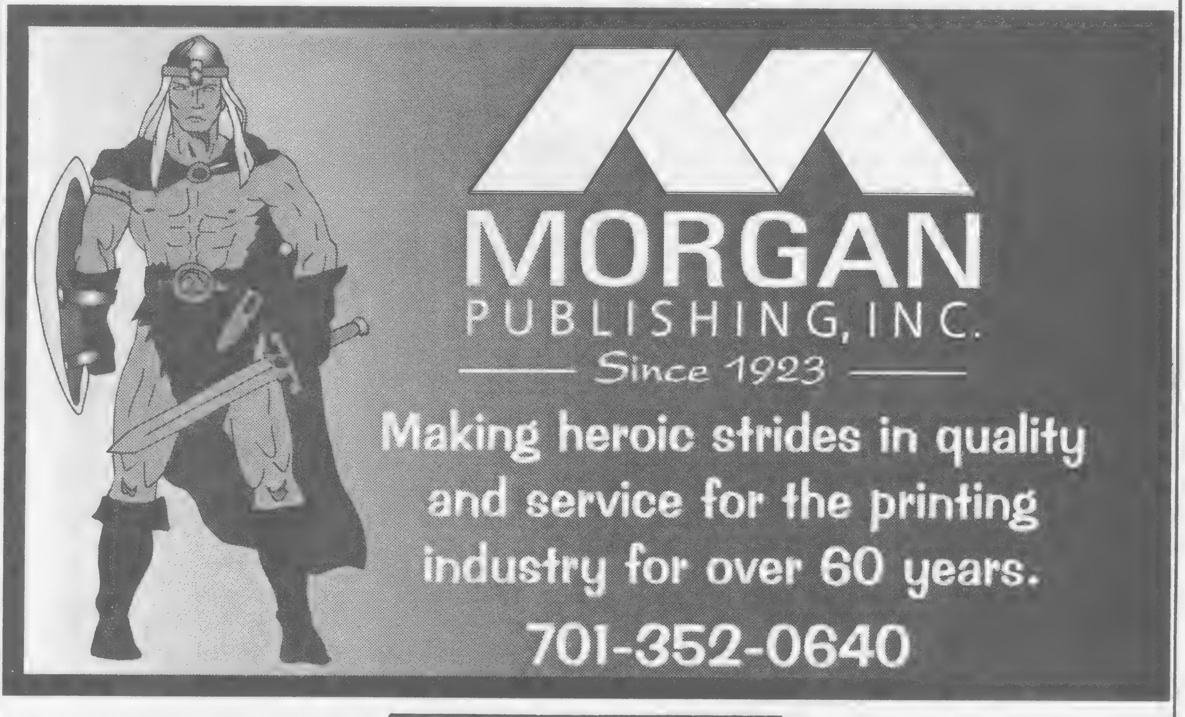
I have been meaning to write for a while. I am writing about COMIC BOOK STORE WARS.

In this book, I am tracing the evolution and battles over creators' rights in comics from the 1890s up from **Outcault, Dirks** (1912 battle: KATZENJAMMER KIDS and THE CAPTAIN AND THE KIDS), **Bud Fisher** (not too many people know that there were *two* MUTT & JEFF strips back in 1908), **Percy Crosby's** fight for SKIPPY, **Bob Kane** and **Charles Moulton's** creator-owned contracts with DC which they are still receiving royalties from, **Milton Caniff** walking away from TERRY AND THE PIRATES, THE SPIRIT still being under **Eisner's** control, **Simon & Kirby's** partial ownership of Crestwood (Prize) and self-publishing Mainline in 1953-54 (ala Image), **Walt Kelly** retaining control over POGO, **Joe Kubert's** royalty contract with St. John in the 1950s, on up through ZAP COMICS getting done and onwards to tell the story of **Jack Katz's** FIRST KINGDOM (which I published through COMICS & COMIX . . . I had to guarantee the print run against my C&C paycheck), Atlas Comics' partial ownership rights of the mid 1970s and other forgotten early pioneers in this business. I will show there isn't a single contract in place today with regards to creators' rights that wasn't in place and being used in the 1940s and 1950s. There are so many misconceptions.

I am going to trace the origins of comics fandom from the early 1930s onwards and try to show all the early fandom guys who are in some facet of the comics business today. I will prove there was an organized fandom of sorts from the 1930s upwards. It did not pop out of nowhere in 1961. It merely went underground in 1955 with the advent of the Comics Code.

There was a zine started by one **James V. Taurasi** called THE FANTASY TIMES. It ran much comic-book news. I have located a number of old issues. I still need many. One, May 1939, details a front-page news story of **Victor Fox** being sued by DC Comics over Wonder Man by **Will Eisner** in WONDER COMICS because of copyright infringement over Superman. In the same article, THRILLING WONDER pulp is also suing Fox over stealing the logo design from their pulp. That explains why the title changed to WONDERWORLD with #3. Another issue a couple months later has a front-page news story about how **Otto Binder** was no longer going to be writing science fiction, but was going to be working exclusively for Fawcett Comics writing same. I have a number of other issues with comic-book news through the 1950s. This man, **Taurasi,** has been totally marginalized by comics fandom history. **Sam Moskowitz** also helped a lot with this zine. There are references to **Mort Weisinger** and **Julius Schwartz. Forrey Ackerman** was the West Coast correspondent.

Raymond Miller sent me a two-page xerox from AMAZING MYSTERY FUNNIES #16 (Dec, 1939) wherein one **John Giunta** reviews mimeo fanzines from the late 1930s!! He discusses (among others) **Taurasi's** FANTASY NEWS and makes comment that FN is discussing AMAZING MAN and AMAZING MYSTERY FUNNIES, which has two new features: Fantom of the Fair and Speed Centaur. Here is a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nationally-distributed comic book reviewing a fanzine talking about comic books!! I have more surprises going into this book. I will open more than a few eyes concerning fandom's true origins.

The earliest comic book advertisement I have located so far in THE FANTASY TIMES dates from 1951 wherein one **Ron Graham** (Indiana) is offering to pay all of $1.00 each for DETECTIVE #27, #38, SCIENCE #1, SUPERWORLD #1-3 and other comics. He is also selling 1940s comics for more than cover price in there. Ron later helped **Ted White** put out THE FACTS BEHIND SUPERMAN. Jimmy, in 1952, also started FANTASY COMICS, which ran for at least 20 issues. Far longer than ALTER EGO, etc. I have #19 and #20. I am actively looking for #s 1-18 as well to fill in my vastly incomplete FANTASY TIMES run.

I sold COMICS INTERVIEW since #1. You sure have published a lot of issues! So many areas to cover. I only recently got a parameter of what my book will encompass. I am 200 pages into a 600-page tome. I hope to make this a definitive treatise as a history book.

I traveled 14,000 miles this summer driving the western half of the USA stopping in at a lot of comics stores. I don't think most of the "experts" out there have any idea of the true numbers of overstock backed up in the storage areas. I stopped inquiring if they had any bulk to sell at a low blow-out price. The typical store had 50,000 upwards to 200,000 recent back issues. If one does some simple math of 50,000 times 3,000 stores, one arrives at 150 million recent issues backed up in limbo. That is a conservative guess. There are some of those who have upwards of a million to 5 million in their holdings.

I think the principles that were at work are typical of how AmWay sucked tens of thousands of people in this country to backstock "product" in their closets in the hopes of reselling it. It made the owners of AmWay worth $3 billion or so. Similar to AmWay is Avon Cosmetics.

I am going to present the true history of how the direct market has evolved. **Phil Seuling** did not "create" something that had already been in place almost seven years before he got the New York City majors to notice (which was in 1974) that it might work as an alternative to the "consignment" method they were subjected to by ARA out of Philadelphia and many others. The absolute true origin, the head waters of the Nile and/or the Missisippi River as it were, was **Robert Crumb** standing on the corner of Haight and Ashbury in San Francisco in Oct. 1967 hawking ZAP #1 for a quarter out of a baby carriage followed by the Print Mint coming out with ZAP #2 in Feb. 1968. Between 1968 and 1976, the Print Mint sold over five million comix. Many, many people contributed to the evolution of the comic shop which led to the formation of the "direct sales" method of comics distribution. This book is their story. (And, please don't get me wrong, Phil has an honored place in my book. He was an incredible teacher and I count myself as one of his pupils.)

An entire re-education of the way comics are thought of in retailing needs to be pounded into *every* comic-book seller that the brand-new ones need to be thought of as reading material, almost like a "loss leader" so the average collector/reader can get back into delving into almost 100 years of cool stuff that has already been produced. Like I said, the new comics market has turned into an AmWay mode of dealing. It is a pyramid scheme that only a few at the top are profiting from.

There are still many stores closing. The future looks bleak. This industry *needs* a history book so the same damn mistakes don't keep repeating themselves. The dealing of comic books has been like a broken record stuck on the same note for over a decade now. It didn't used to be like that. Only us "old timers" in the audience know that. People in it for less than 15 years are only beginning to see what I am even talking about here. Education is a concept that has to be gently repeated over and over, just like when we all had to memorize the multiplication tables by repeating the numbers over and over.

I do feel rather strongly that there needs to be a re-education done on the majority of comics sellers in the country. All these hype-manipulating monthly price "update" mags have got to back off on the brand-new ones. It is a philosophy I feel strongly about. It is something that comes from 30 years hands-on selling comic books. I hope to make a stab at that through my book, COMIC-BOOK STORE WARS. The kids have to be reached out to, because without them, the comics industry will soon begin to experience negative growth like we were in the early-mid 1970s. When **Bud Plant, John Barrett** and myself opened Comics and Comix in 1972, it was an uphill battle teaching the students at UC Berkeley and the surrounding grade and high schools the rewarding experience of comics reading (collecting).

I am compiling the histories of a great many people in the comics field, great many who have been overlooked. They take on a whole new outlook when viewed as a collective whole fighting for an art form with which one can enjoy.

Mr. Kraft, feedback for my book? I would be honored if it came from you, too. Do you know of the comic book witch hunts of the 1950s? Church-sponsored bonfires over the evils of comic books? Polio scares which also led to burning the contents of a child's room?

I am communicating with a great number of people on all levels of this business. **Gareb Shamus** (WIZARD) is lis-

#142
DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S
COMICS INTERVIEW
CROW

tening to me and I hope I have finally got through to him to tone down the price guide. I think he has a great magazine because he has gotten through to a large number of kids. The only thing I strenuously object to is the price guide (*all* price guides) that manipulate the overcharging on brand new ones. Older books have taken decades to find their high-water mark. Manipulation of current books takes undue advantage of trusting young minds. *That* is what is killing the comic-book market . . . plus they simply cost too much for any kid to collect anymore. one needs to re-examine page 50 of WILL EISNER QUARTERLY #3 and listen to some prophetic words of **Phil Seuling.** He predicted market to crash 12 years ago when prices hit $2. It seems like $2-3 is the average. Who can afford it?

Speaking of Phil, his daughter, Gwen, is writing about her father for my book. I am looking forward to receiving that. **Jim Steranko** is going to input also. I just spoke with him a couple of days ago.

I am not seeking to rewrite history. I am not on a "vendetta" against anybody. I am simply compiling a history of what happened, why it happened and how did it.

The main focus of this book is the rise of the comic-book store, which saved the comic book from extinction back in the 1970s. Hopefully, the dealer of today will pick up on and understand what I will teach them with this book. There were many factors that went into that happening that will help in the rebuilding process of the comic-book store. I was around in the middle of it helping make it a reality since 1965. If only my warehouse hadn't flooded out in 1986, knocking me out of the loop. That, because it is history, is a part of my writings.

My first RBCC was #45. I responded to **G.B. Love's** ad in Marvel comics for the HANDBOOK #2. I looked forward to **Raymond Miller's** Info Columns each issue. I sent off for his RB SPECIAL #6 and devoured his early history of Quality Comics. I also relished THE GOLDEN AGE from the SFCA. I read them, yes I did. I wish I still had my copies. The earlier Timely one was out of print at the time. From G.B., I got reprints of ALTER EGO, a copy of MASQUERADER #6 and a host of other zines. I was on my way collecting those also. My first ad selling old comics was in RBCC #47. I am really pissed off how the so-called "history" of fandom has almost completely marginalized **G.B. Love** and all his selfless contributions to building up comics fandom. And him having cerebral palsy to boot!! I am going to fill in this younger generation our memories of G.B., the RBCC, etc. I am asking a number of people to pay homage to this fine gent, who is a real unsung hero (a Fighting Hero as it were) of fandom.

I have been in contact with **Bill Schelly,** yes I have. I wish him all the luck and to keep at his fine work. Our books, while overlapping a little, as far as I can figure, have a completely different take on the subject of comics fandom. I think I am covering a great many people that he is *not* even concerned with in his book. One of my slants as far as comics fandom of the 1960s goes is how many of us went on into working in some aspect of the comics field. In the 1970s, a lot of us put a lot of hard work into trying to help save the comic book from extinction. Bill is more than welcome to write about all the amazines of yore. I am concentrating on the business side. **Barry Bauman, Steve Perrin, Jim Buser** (who started with RB #10) and many others have supplied me with most of what I need via xeroxes. They are young enough to still wish to retain their childhoods. I don't blame them in the slightest. **Peter Coogan** at Michigan State University has already written a history of 1960s comics fandom which is slated to see print soon in a book. The more the merrier, as far as I am concerned. There were thousands of us comics fans out there. They *all* deserve to have their stories told for future unborn generations to discover. Don't you agree?

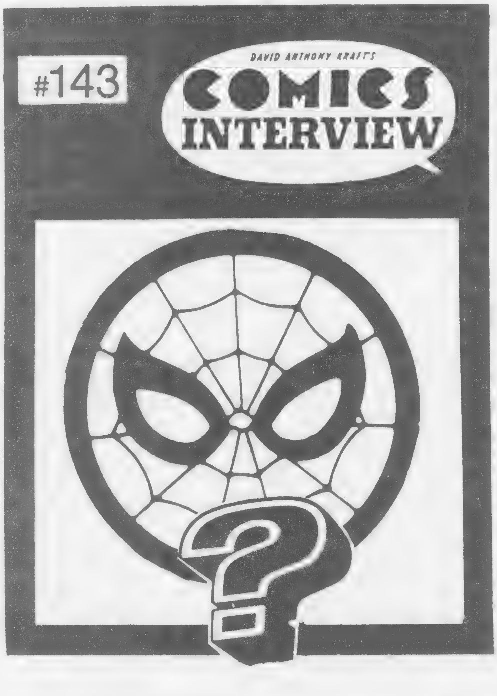
The news about Marvel buying Heroes World Distribution is indeed circulating the comics field. The field might just survive after all. The publishers do need to get closer to their shrinking customer base. Reminds me of the way the underground publishers sold their books directly to the book store. The market is, after all, shrinking. Or at least it will be for a while.

I hope to be finished correlating my data by March of 1995. Please be assured that I am having a couple of really good friends edit the final manuscript. I have a lot of memories but I do not trust my wordsmithing to go into print. My writing improves with each day (I hope).

Robert Beerbohm
P.O. Box 507
Fremont, NB 68025

The best way I know to generate feedback for your book, Robert, is to throw your letter open to the entire comics field for response. To that end, I've also included your questionnaire. Responsible comics-industry observers are invited to respond directly to Robert Beerbohm at the address given.

— DAK



INTERVIEW welcomes your thoughts and comments in the Last Word. Send your correspondence to: DAK, COMICS INTERVIEW, 234 Fifth Ave., Suite 301, New York, NY 10001, or fax your letter to (706) 782-6625. Please include your name and address.

INTERVIEW reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity.

COMIC BOOK STORE WARS QUESTIONAIRE (fill in those that apply)

Name:____________________
Address:____________________
City, State____________________Zip Code__________
Age________Occupation____________________
When did you start reading comics?____________________
How did you come in contact with comics "fandom?"____________________

Did you contribute to any "fanzines?"______If so, which ones__________

What did you do in them?____________________

At what point did you become a "professional" in some aspect of this business?____________________

What have you done in the comics field?____________________

What do you think needs to be done to improve the field?____________________

What do you enjoy about the world of comics?____________________

Do you still see yourself in the comic book world in the year 2001?______
If so, doing what?____________________

What do you think needs to be done to improve the comic book field so more of the the general population will want to read comics again?____________________

COMIC BOOK STORE WARS QUESTIONAIRE page two

What made you decide to pursue a career in the comic book field?

What advice do you offer (if any) to a person who seeks to make a profession in some aspect of the comic book trade?____________________

Why do you think prices of brand new issues sky rocket in value with issues that have huge print runs?____________________

How can we stop the cycle of boom, glut and bust that has taken over the comic book business?____________________

Do we really need so many superhero comics on the market?__________
What are you doing to help focus a change?____________________

Do you still enjoy comics?________Why?____________________

Have you ever tried teaching some one to read utilizing comics as the main educational medium?__________If so, which ones did you use?____________________

And why?____________________

Thank you for spending the time to thoughtfully fill this in. Return to:
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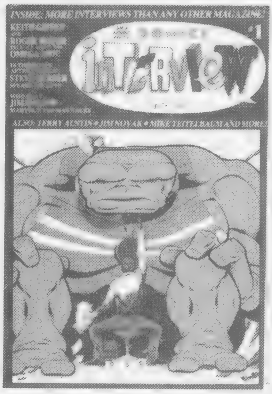
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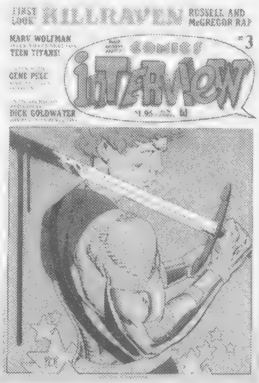
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RUSSELL AND McGREGOR RAP
MARV WOLFMAN
TEEN TITANS!
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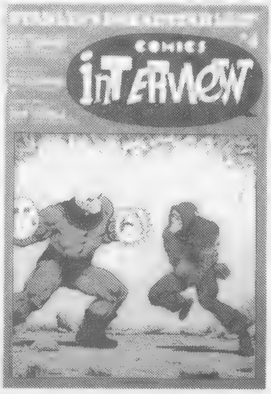
#3
DICK GOLDWATER

#3 COUNTS AS FIVE **Don McGregor & Craig Russell** on KILLRAVEN — Origins of NEW TEEN TITANS told by **Marv Wolfman** — **Howard Chaykin** on AMERICAN FLAGG — French comics by **Neal Adams** — Cover by **Russell.**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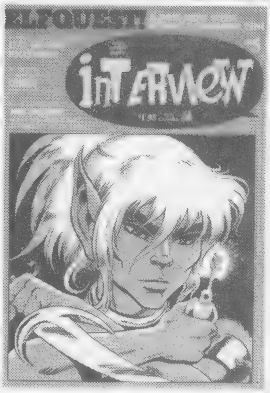
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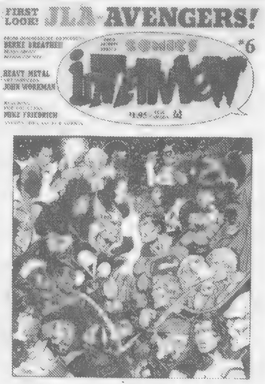
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BERKE BREATHED
HEAVY METAL
JOHN WORKMAN
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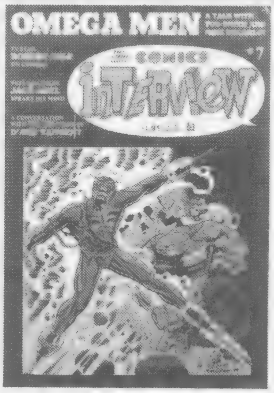
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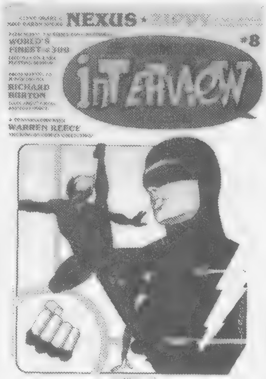
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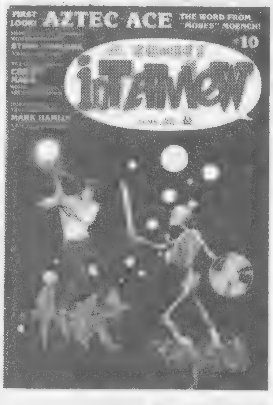
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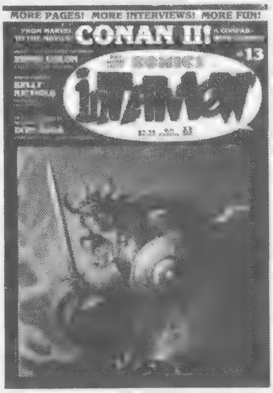
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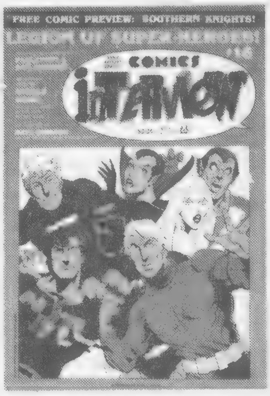
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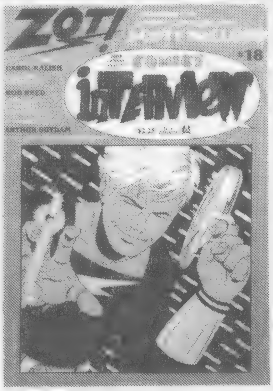
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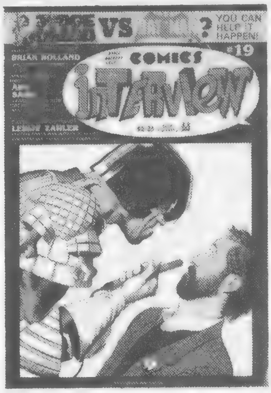
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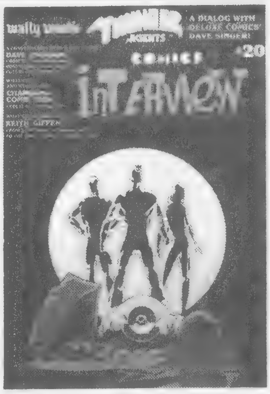
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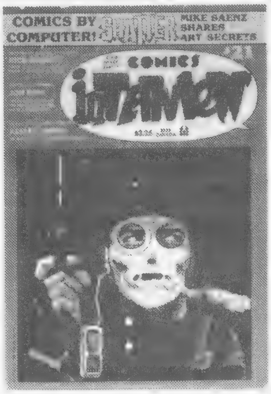
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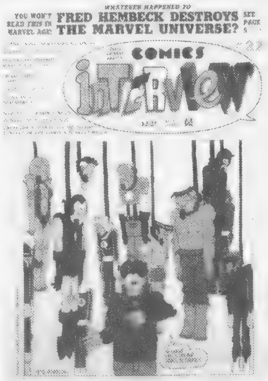
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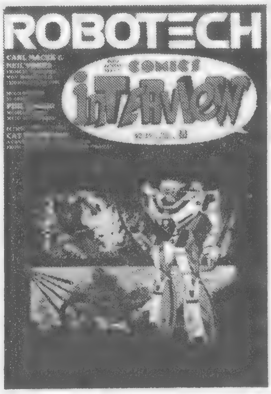
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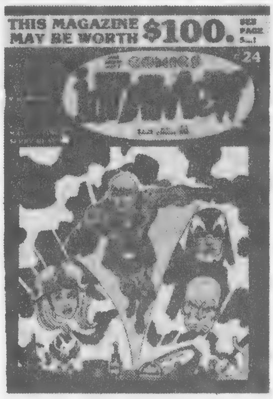
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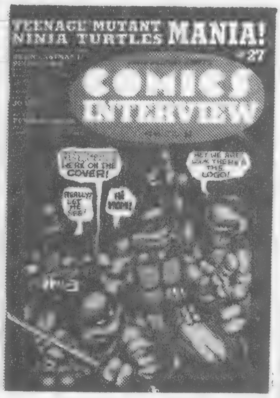
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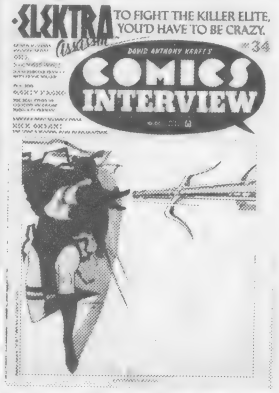
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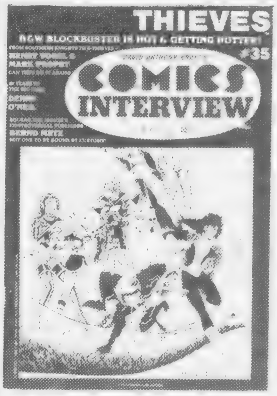
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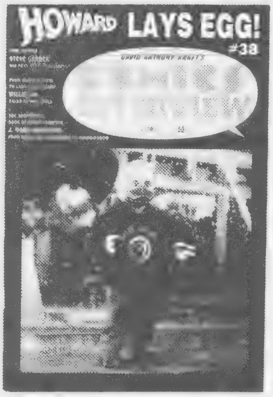
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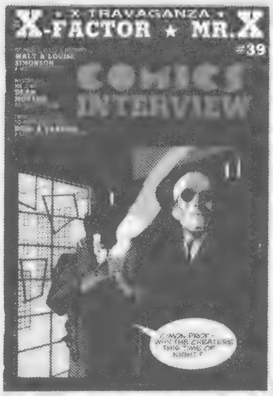
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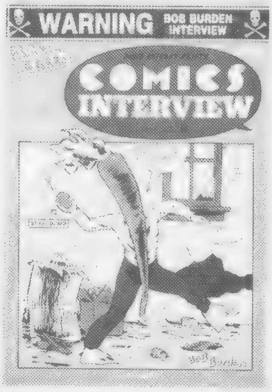
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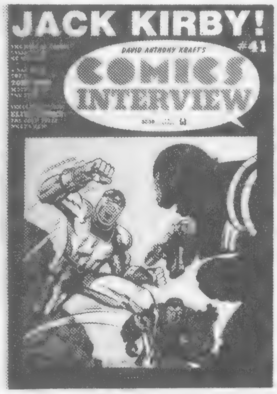
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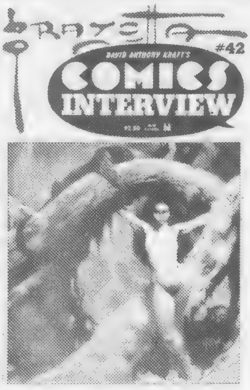
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IN COMICS: WHO'S TO BLAME?
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SHADOWCAT

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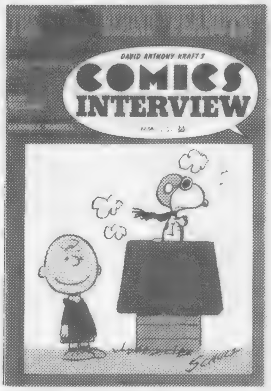
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WATCHMEN MOVIE!
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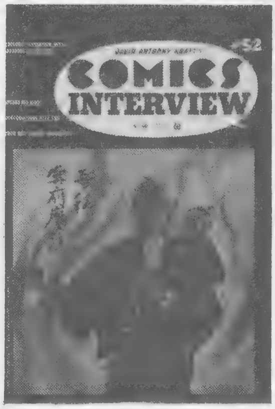
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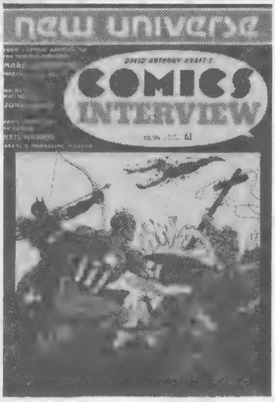
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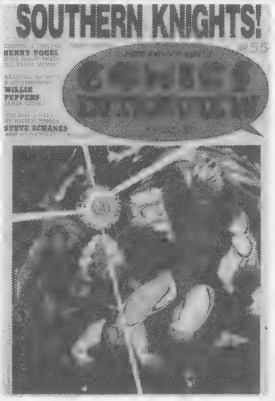
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WILLIE PEPPERS
STEVE SCHANES
COMICS INTERVIEW

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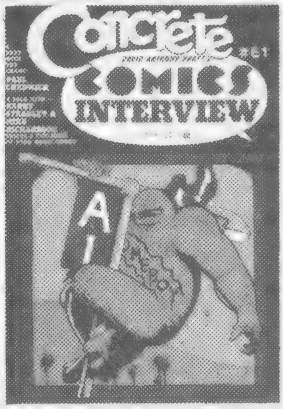
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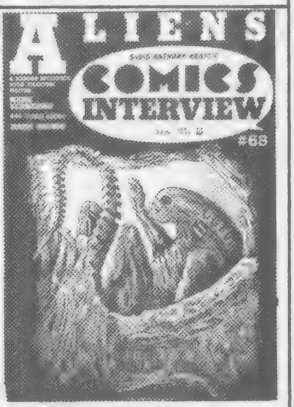
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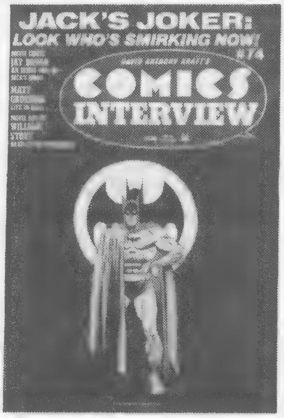
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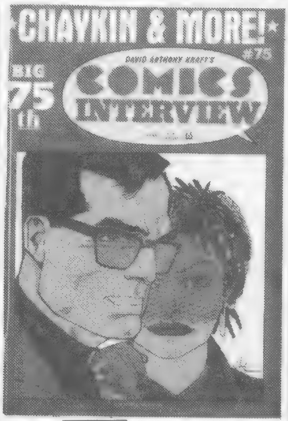
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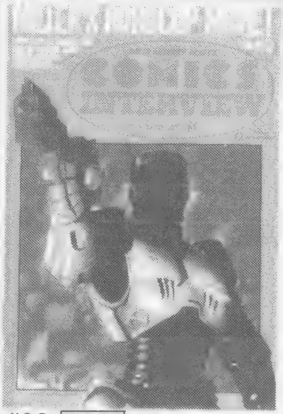
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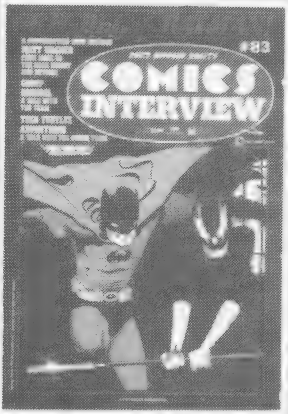
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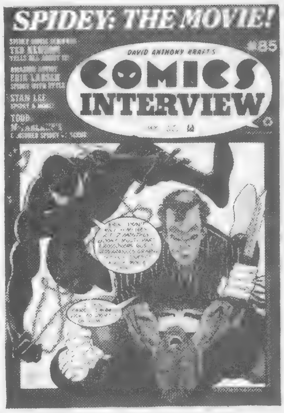
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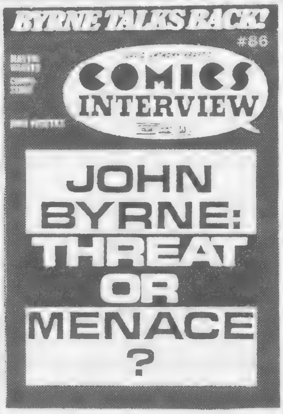
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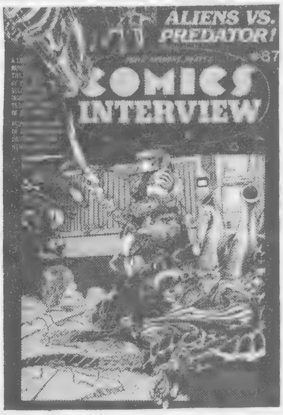
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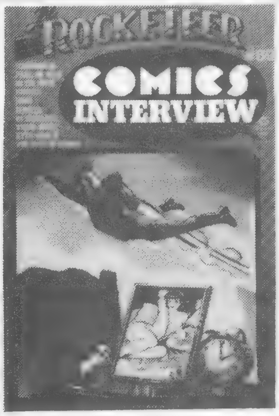
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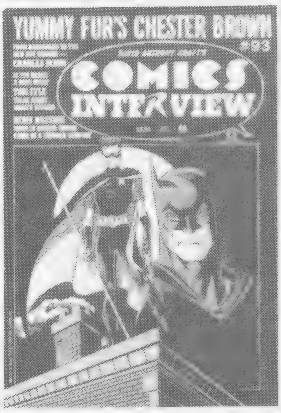
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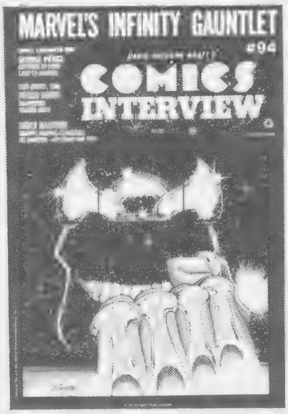
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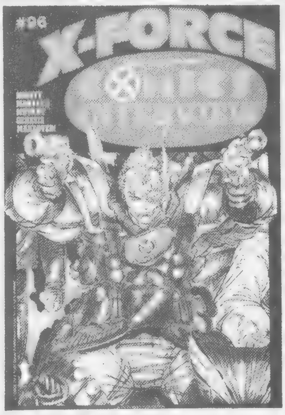
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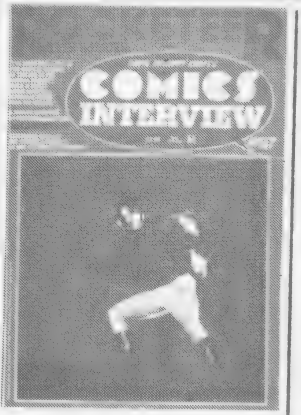
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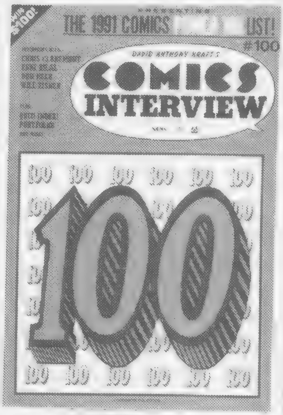
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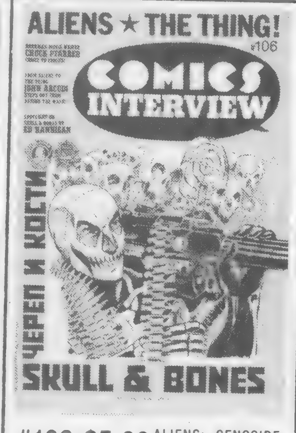
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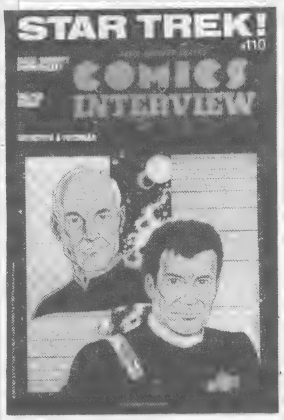
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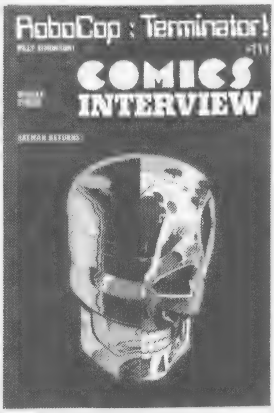
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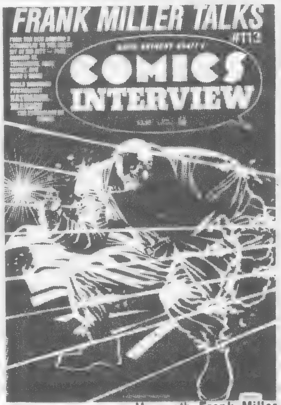
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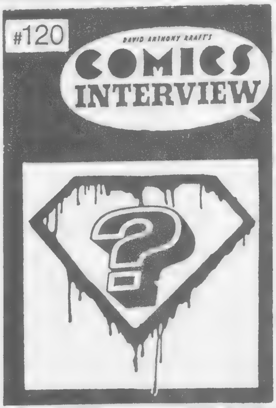
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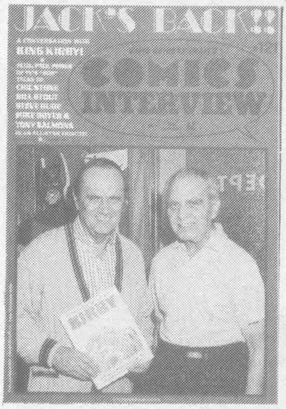
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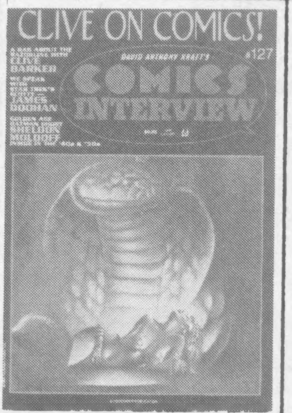
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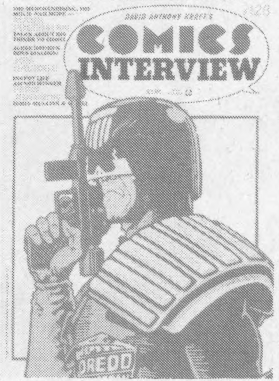
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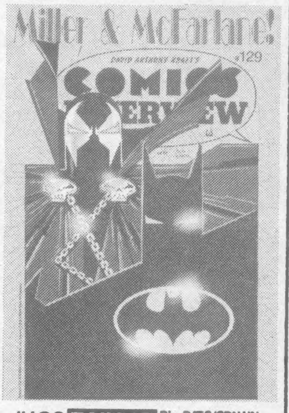
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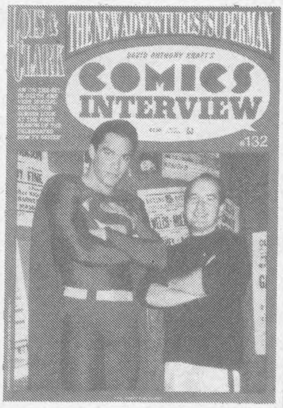
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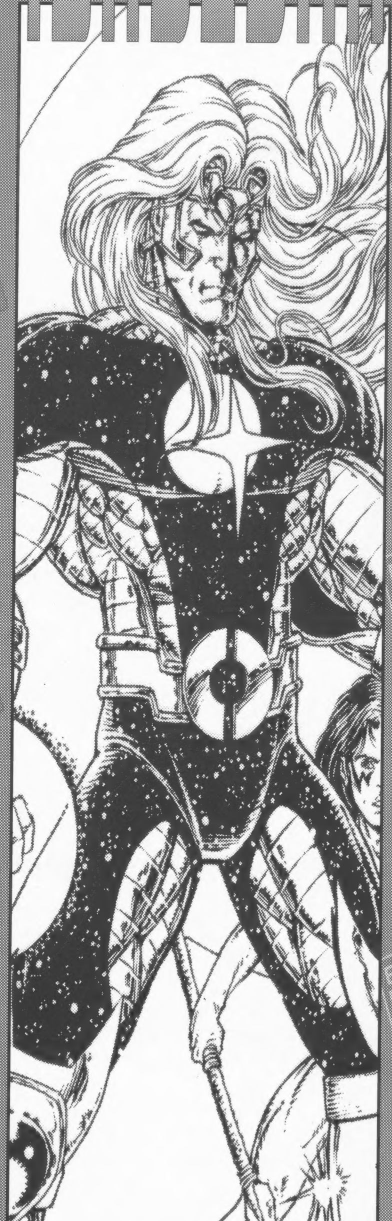

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